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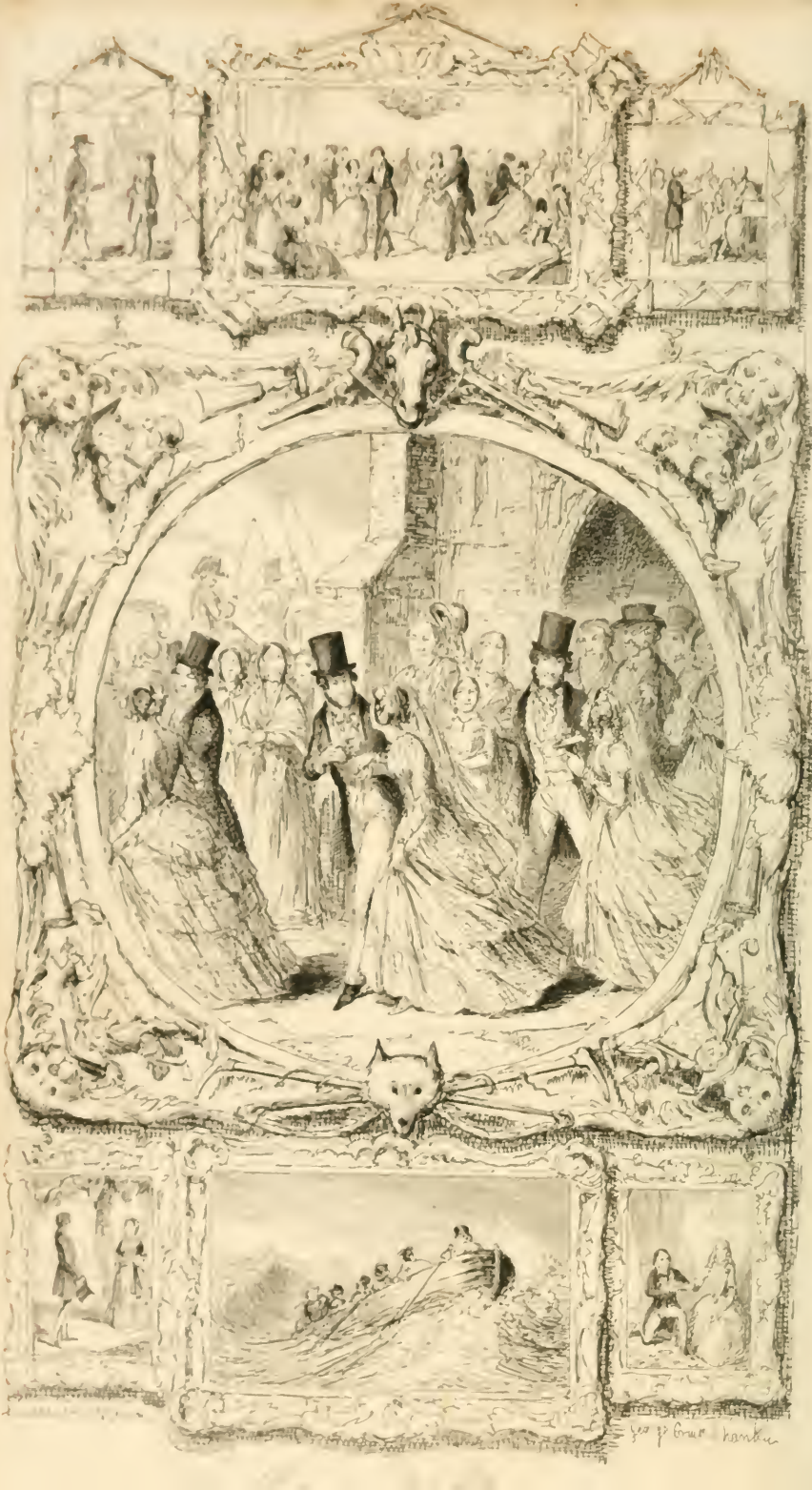


FRANK FAIRLEIGH,

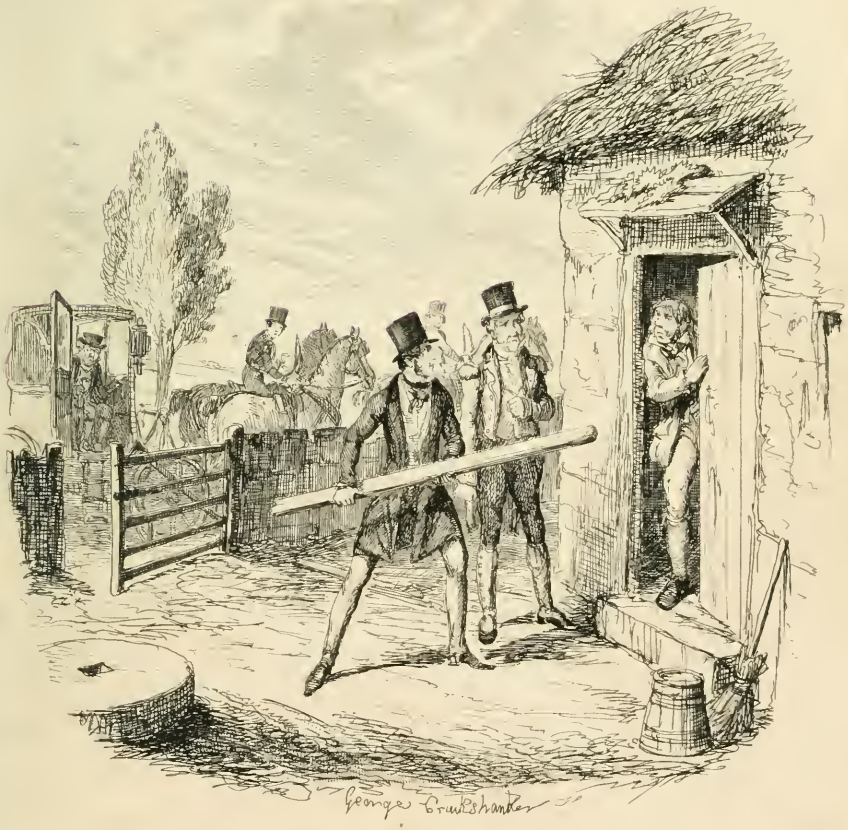
OR

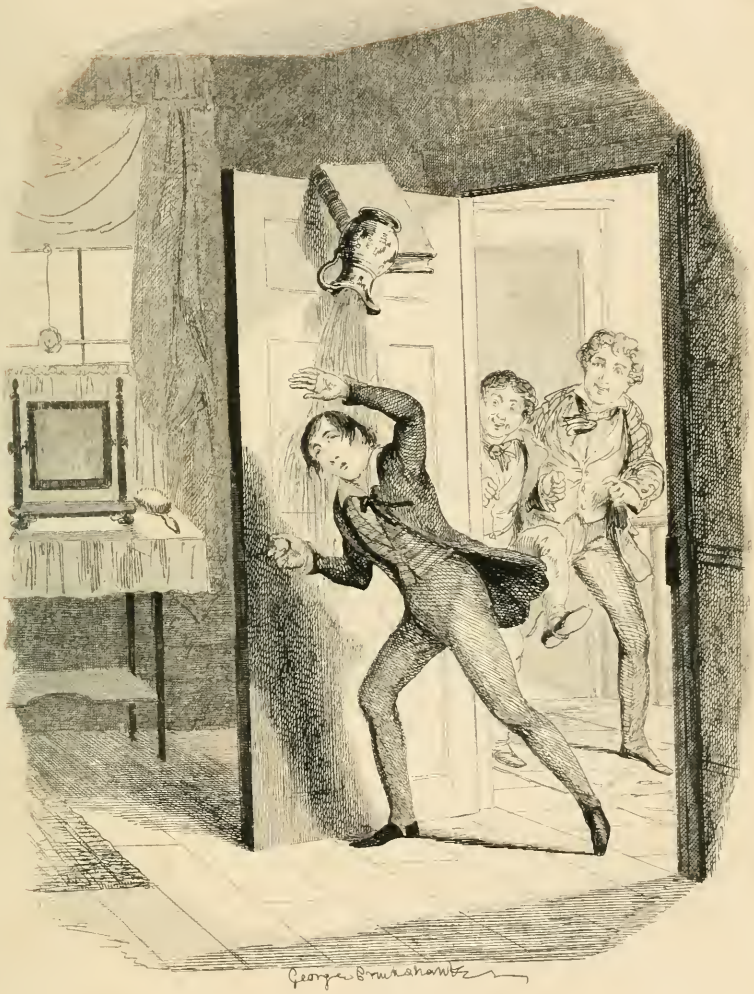
Scenes from the Life of

A PRIVATE PUPIL.

With Illustrations by

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.




George Cruikshank

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DEDICATION.

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To M. U. S. and M. B. S.

My Dear Cousins,

As it is mainly owing to your joint advice and encouragement that this tale has been either written, or laid before the public, there can be none to whom I may with greater propriety dedicate it.

When I add, that my satisfaction in making this slight acknowledgment of the countless acts of affectionate kindness I have received at your hands, is one, among the many agreeable results, of the advice which has eventually led me to adopt a literary career, you will not refuse to accept this assurance, that you have contributed to the happiness of one, whose sphere, both of duties and of pleasures, Providence has seen fit to limit.

That our friendship may continue uninterrupted through Time, is the hope, and through Eternity, is the prayer, of your affectionate friend and cousin,

THE AUTHOR.

1228569

PREFACE.

HAVING, from causes of a physical nature, much leisure time upon my hands, I amused myself by working into a story, my recollections of certain boyish *escapades* at a private tutor's. My reason for selecting such a theme was twofold. In the first place, it struck me, that while volume after volume had been devoted to "Schoolboy Days," and "College Life," the mysteries of that paradise of public-school-fearing mammas—a "Private Tutor's"—yet continued unrevealed; and I resolved to enlighten these tender parents as to the precise nature of the rose-bed into which they were so anxious to transplant their darlings. In the second place, I wished to prove to the young Hopefuls themselves, that a lad, hitherto shielded from evil by the hallowing influences of home, may successfully resist the new trials and temptations to which, on this his first essay in life, he may be subjected; that the difficulties which surround him, will yield to a little firmness and decision; and that such a course, steadily persisted in, will alike gain him the esteem of his companions, and lay the foundation of the character which it should be his aim to support through life—viz., that of a Christian and a gentleman. With such views, the earlier

"Scenes from the Life of a Private Pupil" were written, and appeared originally in the pages of "SHARPE'S MAGAZINE." The tale proved popular, and was continued at the request of the then editor, till it attained its present limits.

In the delineation of character, my desire has been to paint men as they *are*, rather than as they should be; and the moral (if moral there be) is to be derived quite as much from their faults as from their virtues. To this design must also be traced all inconsistencies of character,—as, for example, when Frank Fairlegh, possessing sufficient religious principle to enable him to look upon duelling as a crime which no combination of circumstances can justify, yet becomes involved in such an affair himself. These shortcomings doubtless evince a lamentable contrast to the perfection of the stereotyped novel hero; but as it has never been my good fortune to meet with that faultless monster, a perfectly consistent man, or woman, I prefer describing character as I find it.

Should this, my first work, fall into the hands of my former Tutor, let me take this opportunity of thanking him for the trouble he bestowed upon a graceless boy, who even then possessed sufficient sense to perceive and appreciate his many high and endearing qualities. If any of my fellow-pupils peruse these pages, and, recognizing certain incidents of their boyish days, seek to fit my ideal sketches to living prototypes, let me beg them to bear in mind that the character of RICHARD CUMBERLAND is *purely fictitious*, and introduced, like that of WILFORD, to satisfy the requirements of a tale writer, and enable me to work out the details of my story. In regard to the other *dramatis personæ*, although I have occasionally taken a hint from

living models, and although certain incidents (*e. g.* the bell-ringing scene) are founded on fact, I never have copied, and never will copy, so closely as to flatter or wound the feelings of any person; and those who imagine that, in their sagacity, they have discovered Lawless was intended for Mr. A., or Mrs. Coleman for Mrs. B., deceive themselves, and attribute a degree of skill in portrait-painting, of which he is equally unconscious and undeserving, to

THE AUTHOR.

London, *Feb.*, 1850.

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FRANK FAIRLEGH;

OR,

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF A PRIVATE PUPIL.

CHAPTER I.

ALL RIGHT! OFF WE GO!

"Yet here * * * you are staid for
* * * There my blessing with you,
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character——."

"Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits
* * * * *
I rather would entreat thy company
To see the wonders of the world abroad,
Than living dully, sluggardiz'd at home,
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness."

"Where unbruised youth, with unstuff'd brain,
Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth reign."

Shakspeare.

"NEVER forget, under any circumstances, to think and act like a gentleman, and don't exceed your allowance," said my father.

"Mind you read your Bible, and remember what I told you about wearing flannel waistcoats," cried my mother.

And with their united "God bless you, my boy!" still ringing in my ears, I found myself inside the stage-coach, on my way to London.

Now, I am well aware that the correct thing for a boy in my situation (*i. e.* leaving home for the first time) would be to fall back on his seat, and into a reverie, during which, utterly lost to all external impressions, he should entertain the thoughts and feelings of a well-informed man of thirty; the same thoughts and feelings being clothed in the semi-poetic prose of a fashionable novel writer.

Deeply grieved, therefore, am I at being forced both to set at nought so laudable an established precedent, and to expose my own degeneracy. But the truth must be told at all hazards. The only feeling I experienced, beyond a vague sense of loneliness and desolation, was one of great personal discomfort. It rained hard, so that a small stream of water, which descended from the roof of the coach as I entered it, had insinuated itself between one of the flannel waistcoats which formed so important an item in the maternal valediction, and my skin, whence, endeavouring to carry out what a logician would call the "law of its being," by finding its own level, it placed me in the undesirable position of an involuntary disciple of the cold-water cure taking a "sitz-bad." As to my thoughts, the reader shall have the full benefit of them, in the exact order in which they flitted through my brain.

First came a vague desire to render my position more comfortable, ending in a forlorn hope that intense and continued sitting might, by some undefined process of evaporation, cure the evil. This suggested a speculation, half pleasing and half painful, as to what would be my mother's feelings, could she be aware of the state of things; the pleasure being the result of that mysterious preternatural delight which a boy always takes in everything at all likely to injure his health, or endanger his existence, and the pain arising from the knowledge that there was now no one near me to care whether I was comfortable or not. Again, these speculations merged into a sort of dreamy wonder, as to why a queer little old gentleman opposite (my sole fellow-traveller) was grunting like a pig, at intervals of about a minute, though he was wide awake the whole time; and whether a small tuft of hair, on a mole at the tip of his nose, could have anything to do with it. At this point, my meditations were interrupted by the old gentleman himself, who, after a louder grunt than usual, gave vent to his feelings in the following speech, which was partly addressed to me and partly a soliloquy.

"Umph! going to school, my boy, eh?" then, in a lower tone, "wonder why I called him *my* boy, when he's no such thing: just like me; umph!"

I replied by informing him that I was not exactly going to school—(I was nearly fifteen, and the word "school" sounded derogatory to my dignity)—but that, having been up to the present time educated at home by my father, I was now on my way to complete my studies under the care of a private tutor, who only received six

pupils, a very different thing from a school, as I took the liberty of insinuating.

"Umph! different thing? You will cost more, learn less, and fancy yourself a man when you are a boy; that's the only difference I can see:" then came the aside—"Snubbing the poor child, when he's a peg too low already, just like me; umph!"

After which he relapsed into a silence which continued uninterrupted until we reached London, save once, while we were changing horses, when he produced a flask with a silver top, and, taking a sip himself, asked me if I drank brandy. On my shaking my head, with a smile caused by what appeared to me the utter wildness and desperation of the notion, he muttered,

"Umph! of course he doesn't; how should he?—just like me."

In due course of time we reached the Old Bell Inn, Holborn, where the coach stopped, and where my trunk and myself were to be handed over to the tender mercies of the coachman of the "Rocket," a fast coach (I speak of the slow old days when railroads were unknown), which then ran to Helmstone, the watering-place where my future tutor, the Rev. Doctor Mildman, resided. My first impressions of London are scarcely worth recording, for the simple reason that they consisted solely of intense and unmitigated surprise at everything and everybody I saw and heard; which may be more readily believed when I add the fact, that my preconceived notions of the metropolis had led me to imagine it perhaps might be twice the size of the town nearest to my father's house; in short, almost as large as Grosvenor Square.

Here, then, I parted company with my fellow-traveller, who took leave of me thus—

"Umph! well, good-bye; be a good boy—good man, you'd like me to say, I suppose; man indeed! umph! don't forget what your parents told you;" then adding, "Of course he will, what's the use of telling him not? just like me;"—he dived into the recesses of a hackney-coach, and disappeared.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during my journey to Helmstone, where we arrived at about half-past four in the afternoon. My feelings of surprise and admiration were destined once more to be excited on this (to me) memorable day, as, in my way from the coach-office to Langdale Terrace, where Doctor Mildman resided, I beheld, for the first time, that most stupendous work of God, the mighty Ocean; which, alike in its wild resistless freedom, and its miraculous obedience to the command, "Thus far shalt thou come,

and no further," bears at once the plainest print of its Almighty Creator's hand, while it affords a strong and convincing proof of His omnipotence.

On knocking at the door of Doctor Mildman's house (if the truth must be told, it was with a trembling hand I did so), it was opened by a man-servant, whose singularly plain features were characterized by an expression alternating between extreme civility and an intense appreciation of the ludicrous.

On mentioning my name, and asking if Doctor Mildman was at home, he replied,—

"Yes, sir, master's in, sir; so you're Mr. Fairlegh, sir, our new young gent, sir?" (here the ludicrous expression predominated;) "hope you'll be comfortable, sir," (here he nearly burst into a laugh;) "show you into master's study, sir, directly," (here he became preternaturally grave again;) and opening the study door, ushered me into the presence of the dreaded tutor.

On my entrance, Doctor Mildman (for such I presumed a middle-aged gentleman, the sole tenant of the apartment, to be) rose from a library table, at which he had been seated, and, shaking me kindly by the hand, inquired after the health of my father and mother, what sort of journey I had had, and sundry other particulars of the like nature, evidently with the good-humoured design of putting me a little more at my ease, as I have no doubt the trepidation I was well aware of feeling inwardly, at finding myself *tête-à-tête* with a real live tutor, was written in very legible characters on my countenance. Doctor Mildman, whose appearance I studied with an anxious eye, was a gentlemanly-looking man of five-and-forty, or thereabouts, with a high bald forehead, and good features, the prevailing expression of which, naturally mild and benevolent, was at times chequered by that look which all schoolmasters sooner or later acquire—a look which seems to say, "Now, sir, do you intend to mind me, or do you not?" Had it not been for this, and for an appearance of irresolution about the mouth, he would have been a decidedly fine-looking man. While I was making these observations, he informed me that I had arrived just in time for dinner, and that the servant should show me to my sleeping apartment, whence, when I had sacrificed to the Graces (as he was pleased to call dressing), I was to descend to the drawing-room, and be introduced to Mrs. Mildman and my future companions.

My sleeping-room, which was rather a small garret than otherwise, was furnished, as it appeared to me, with more regard to

economy than to the comfort of its inmate. At one end stood a small four-post bedstead, which, owing to some mysterious cause, chose to hold its near fore-leg up in the air, and slightly advanced, thereby impressing the beholder with the idea that it was about to trot into the middle of the room. On an unpainted deal table stood a looking-glass, which, from a habit it had of altering and embellishing the face of any one who consulted it, must evidently have possessed a strong natural taste for the ludicrous: an ancient washing-stand, supporting a basin and towel, and a dissipated-looking chair, completed the catalogue.

And here, while preparing for the alarming ordeal I was so soon to undergo, let me present to the reader a slight sketch of myself, mental and bodily; and, as mind ought to take precedence of matter, I will attempt, as far as I am able after the lapse of time, to paint my character in true colours, "nought extenuating nor setting down aught in malice." I was, then, as the phrase goes, "a very well-behaved young gentleman;" that is, I had a great respect for all properly constituted authorities, and an extreme regard for the proprieties of life; was very particular about my shoes being clean, and my hat nicely brushed; always said "Thank you," when a servant handed me a plate, and "May I trouble you?" when I asked for a bit of bread. In short, I bade fair in time to become a thorough old bachelor; one of those unhappy mortals whose lives are alike a burthen to themselves and others,—men who, by magnifying the minor household miseries into events of importance, are uneasy and suspicious about the things from the wash having been properly aired, and become low and anxious as the dreaded time approaches when clean sheets are inevitable! My ideas of a private tutor, derived chiefly from "Sandford and Merton," and "Evenings at Home," were rather wide of the mark, leading me to expect that Dr. Mildman would impart instruction to us during long rambles over green fields, and in the form of moral allegories, to which we should listen with respectful attention and affectionate esteem. With regard to my outward man, or rather boy, I should have been obliged to confine myself to such particulars as I could remember, namely, that I was tall for my age, but slightly built, and so thin, as often to provoke the application of such epithets as "hop-pole," "thread-paper," &c., had it not been that, in turning over some papers a few days since, I stumbled on a water-colour sketch of myself, which I well remember being taken by a young artist in the neighbourhood, just before I left home, in the hope of consoling

my mother for my departure. It represented a lad about fifteen, in a picturesque attitude, feeding a pony out of a very elegant little basket, with what appeared to be white currants, though I have every reason to believe they were meant for oats. The aforesaid youth rejoiced in an open shirt collar and black ribbon *à la* Byron, curling hair of a dark chestnut colour, regular features, a high forehead, complexion like a girl's, very pink and white, and a pair of large blue eyes, engaged in regarding the white currant oats with intense surprise, as well indeed they might. Whether this young gentleman bore more resemblance to me, than the currants did to oats, I am, of course, unable to judge; but, as the portrait represented a very handsome boy, I hope none of my readers will be rude enough to doubt that it was a striking likeness.

I now proceeded to render myself thoroughly wretched, by attempting to extricate the articles necessary for a change of dress from the very bottom of my trunk, where, according to the nature of such things, they had hidden themselves; grammars, lexicons, and other like "Amenities of Literature," being the things that came to hand most readily. Scarcely had I contrived to discover a wearable suit, when I was informed that dinner was on the table; so, hastily tumbling into my clothes, and giving a final peep at the facetious looking-glass, the result of which was to twist the bow of my Byron tie under my left ear, in the belief that I was thereby putting it straight, I rushed down stairs, just in time to see the back of the hindmost pupil disappear through the dining room door.

"Better late than never, Fairlegh. Mrs. Mildman, this is Fairlegh; he can sit by you, Coleman;—'For what we are going to receive,' &c.;—Thomas, the carving-knife."

Such was the address with which my tutor greeted my entrance, and, during its progress, I popped into a seat indicated by a sort of half wink from Thomas, resisting by a powerful act of self-control a sudden impulse which seized me, to bolt out of the room, and do something rash but indefinite, between going to sea and taking prussic acid; not quite either, but partaking of the nature of both.

"Take soup, Fairlegh?" said Dr. Mildman.

"Thank you, sir, if you please."

"A pleasant journey had you?" inquired Mrs. Mildman.

"Not any, I am much obliged to you," I replied, thinking of the fish.

This produced a total silence, during which the pupils exchanged

glances, and Thomas concealed an illicit smile behind the bread basket.

"Does your father," began Dr. Mildman in a very grave and deliberate manner, "does your father shoot?—boiled mutton, my dear?"

I replied that he had given it up of late years, as the fatigue was too much for him.

"Oh! I was very fond of carrying a gun—pepper—when I was —a spoon—at Oxford; I could hit a—mashed potato—bird as well as most men; yes, I was very sorry to give up my double barrel—ale, Thomas."

"You came inside, I believe?" questioned Mrs. Mildman, a lady possessing a shadowy outline, indistinct features faintly characterized by an indefinite expression, long ringlets of an almost impossible shade of whity-brown, and a complexion and general appearance only to be described by the term "washed out."

"Yes, all the way, ma'am."

"Did you not dislike it very much? it creases one's gown so, unless it is a merino or mousseline-de-laine; but one can't always wear them, you know."

Not being in the least prepared with a suitable answer, I merely made what I intended to be an affirmative ahem, in doing which a crumb of bread chose to go the wrong way, producing a violent fit of coughing, in the agonies of which I seized and drank off Dr. Mildman's tumbler of ale, mistaking it for my own small beer. The effect of this, my crowning *gaucherie*, was to call forth a languid smile on the countenance of the senior pupil, a tall young man, with dark hair, and a rather forbidding expression of face, which struggled only too successfully with an attempt to look exceedingly amiable; which smile was repeated with variations by all the others.

"I'm afraid you do not distinctly perceive the difference between those important pronouns, *meum* and *tuum*, Fairlegh? Thomas, a clean glass!" said Dr. Mildman, with a forced attempt at drollery; but Thomas had evaporated suddenly, leaving no clue to his whereabouts, unless sundry faint sounds of suppressed laughter outside the door, indicating, as I fancied, his extreme appreciation of my unfortunate mistake, proceeded from him.

It is, I believe, a generally received axiom, that all mortal affairs must sooner or later come to an end: at all events, the dinner I have been describing did not form an exception to the rule. In due

time Mrs. Mildman disappeared, after which Dr. Mildman addressed a remark or two about Greek tragedy to the tall pupil, which led to a dissertation on the merits of a gentleman named Prometheus, who, it seemed, was bound in some peculiar way, but whether this referred to his apprenticeship to any trade, or to the cover of the book containing his history, did not appear. This conversation lasted about ten minutes, at the expiration of which the senior pupil "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" at the others, who instantly rose, and conveyed themselves out of the room with such rapidity, that I, being quite unprepared for such a proceeding, sat for a moment in silent amazement, and then, becoming suddenly alive to a sense of my situation, rushed frantically after them. My speed was checked somewhat abruptly by a door at the end of the passage being violently slammed in my face, for which polite attention I was indebted to the philanthropy of the hindmost pupil, who thereby imposed upon me the agreeable task of feeling in the dark for a door-handle in an unknown locality. After fumbling for some time, in a state of the greatest bewilderment, I at length opened the door, and beheld the interior of the "pupils' room," which, for the benefit of such of my readers as may never have seen the like, I will now endeavour shortly to describe.

The parlour devoted to the pupils' use was of a good size, nearly square, and, like the cabin of a certain "ould Irish gentleman," appeared to be fitted up with "nothing at all for show." In three of the corners stood small tables covered with books and writing materials, for the use of Dr. Mildman and the two senior pupils; in the fourth was a book-case. The centre of the room was occupied by a large square table, the common property of the other pupils; while a carpet, "a little the worse for wear," and sundry veteran chairs, rather crazy from the treatment to which many generations of pupils had subjected them, (a chair being the favourite projectile in the event of a *shindy*,) completed the catalogue. Mr. Richard Cumberland, the senior pupil, was lounging in an easy attitude on one side of the fire-place; on the other stood, bolt upright, a lad rather older than myself, with a long unmeaning face, and a set of arms and legs which appeared not to belong to one another. This worthy, as I soon learned, responded to the name of Nathaniel Mullins, and usually served as the butt of the party, in the absence of newer or worthier game. Exactly in front of the fire, with his coat tails under his arms, and his legs extended like a pair of compasses, was stationed Mr. George Lawless, who, having

been expelled from one of the upper forms at Eton, for some heroic exploit, which the head-master could not be persuaded to view in its proper light, was sent to vegetate for a year or two at Dr. Mildman's, ere he proceeded to one of the universities. This gentleman was of rather a short thick-set figure, with a large head, and an expression of countenance resembling that of a bull when the animal "means mischief," and was supposed by his friends to be more thoroughly "wide awake" than any one of his years in the three kingdoms. The quartette was completed by Mr. Frederick Coleman, a small lad, with a round merry face, who was perched on the back of a chair, with his feet resting on the hob, and his person so disposed as effectually to screen every ray of fire from Nathaniel Mullins.

"You are not cold, Fairlegh? Don't let me keep the fire from you," said Lawless, without, however, showing the slightest intention of moving.

"Not very, thank you."

"Eh! quite right—glad to hear it. It's Mildman's wish that, during the first half, no pupil should come on the hearth-rug. I made a point of conscience of it myself when I first came. The Spartans, you know, never allowed their little boys to do so, and even the Athenians, a much more luxurious people, always had their pinafores made of asbestos, or some such fire-proof stuff. You are well read in Walker's History of Greece, I hope?"

I replied, that I was afraid I was not.

"Never read 'Hookeyus Magnus?' Your father ought to be ashamed of himself for neglecting you so. You are aware, I suppose, that the Greeks had a different sort of fire to what we burn now-a-days? You've heard of Greek fire?"

I answered that I had, but did not exactly understand what it meant.

"Not know that, either? disgraceful! Well, it was a kind of way they had of flaring up in those times, a sort of 'light of other days,' which enabled them to give their friends a warm reception; so much so, indeed, that their friends found it too warm sometimes, and latterly they usually reserved it for their enemies. Mind you remember all this, for it is one of the first things old Sam will be sure to ask you."

Did my ears deceive me? Could he have called the tutor, the dreaded tutor, "old Sam?" I trembled as I stood—plain, unhonoured "Sam," as though he had spoken of a footman! The

room turned round with me. Alas! for Sandford and Merton, and affectionate and respectful esteem!

"But how's this?" continued Lawless, "we have forgotten to introduce you in form to your companions, and to enter your name in the books of the establishment; why, Cumberland, what were you thinking of?"

"Beg pardon," rejoined Cumberland, "I really was so buried in thought, trying to solve that problem about bisecting the Siamese twins,—you know it, Lawless? However, it is not too late, is it? Allow me to introduce you, Mr. Fairplay."—

"Legh, sir," interrupted I.

"Ah, exactly; well, then, Mr. Fairlegh, let me introduce this gentleman, Mr. George Lawless, who has, if I mistake not, been already trying, with his usual benevolence, to supply a few of your deficiencies; he is, if he will allow me to say so, one of the most rising young men of his generation, one of the firmest props of the glorious edifice of our rights and privileges."

"A regular brick," interposed Coleman.

"Hold your tongue, Freddy; little boys should be seen and not heard, as Tacitus tells us," said Lawless, reprovingly.

The only reply to this, if reply it could be called, was something which sounded to me like a muttered reference to the Greek historian Walker, whom Lawless had so lately mentioned; and Cumberland continued,—

"You will pay great attention to everything Lawless tells you, and endeavour to improve by following his example, at a respectful distance—ahem! The gentleman on your right hand, Mr. Mullins, who is chiefly remarkable for looking ('like a fool,' put in Coleman, *sotto voce*,) before he leaps, so long, that in general he postpones leaping altogether, and is in the habit of making ('an ass of himself,' suggested Coleman)—really, Freddy, I am surprised at you,—of making two bites at a cherry—you will be better able to appreciate when you know more of him. As to my young friend Freddy here, his naturally good abilities and amiable temper, ('Draw it mild, old fellow!' interrupted the young gentleman in question,) have interested us so much in his favour, that we cannot but view with regret a habit he has of late fallen into, of turning everything into ridicule, ('What a pity!' from the same individual,) together with a lamentable addiction to the use of slang terms. Let me hope his association with such a polished young gentleman as Mr. Fairlegh may improve him in these particulars."

"Who drank Mildman's ale at dinner?" asked Coleman; "if that's a specimen of his polished manners, I think mine take the shine out of them, rather."

"I assure you," interrupted I, eagerly, "I never was more distressed in my life; it was quite a mistake."

"Pretty good mistake,—Hodgson's pale ale for Muddytub's swipes,—eh, Mull.?" rejoined Coleman.

"I believe you," replied Mullins.

"Well, now for entering your name; that's important, you know," said Lawless; "you had better ring the bell, and tell Thomas to bring the books."

I obeyed, and when Thomas made his appearance, informed him of my desire to enter my name in the books of the establishment, which I begged he would bring for that purpose. A look of bewilderment that came over his face on hearing my request, changed to an expression of intelligence, as, after receiving some masonic sign from Lawless, he replied—

"The books, sir; yes, sir; bring 'em directly, sir."

After a few minutes he returned with two small, not over-clean, books, ruled with blue lines. One of these Lawless took from him, opened with much ceremony, and covering the upper part of the page with a bit of blotting paper, pointed to a line, and desired me to write my name and age, as well as the date of my arrival, upon it. The same ceremony was repeated with the second.

"That's all right: now let's see how it reads," said he, and, removing the blotting paper, read as follows:—"Pair of Wellingtons, £1 15s.; satin stock, 25s.; cap ribbon for Sally Duster, 2s. 6d.; box of cigars, £1 16s. (mem. shocking bad lot)—Nov. 5th, Francis Fairlegh, aged 15.'—So much for that; now, let's see the next:—Five shirts, four pair of stockings, six pocket handkerchiefs, two pairs of white ducks—Nov. 5th, Francis Fairlegh, aged 15.'"

Here his voice was drowned in a roar of laughter from the whole party assembled, Thomas included, during which the true state of the case dawned upon me, viz.—that I had, with much pomp and ceremony, entered my name, age, and the date of my arrival, in Mr. George Lawless's private account and washing books!

My thoughts, as I laid my aching head upon my pillow that night, were not of the most enviable nature. Leaving for the first time the home where I had lived from childhood, and in which I had met with affection and kindness from all around me, had been a trial under which my fortitude would most assuredly have given

way, but for the brilliant picture my imagination had very obligingly sketched of the "happy family," of which I was about to become a member; in the foreground of which stood a group of fellow pupils, a united brotherhood of congenial souls, containing three bosom friends at the very least, anxiously awaiting my arrival, with outstretched arms of welcome. Now, however, this last hope had failed me; for, innocent (or, as Coleman would have termed it, *green*) as I then was, I could not but perceive, that the tone of mock politeness assumed towards me by Cumberland and Lawless was merely a convenient cloak for impertinence, which could be thrown aside at any moment when a more open display of their powers of tormenting should seem advisable. In fact, (though I was little aware of the pleasures in store for me,) I had already seen enough to prove that the life of a private pupil was not exactly "all my fancy painted it;" and, as the misery of leaving those I loved proved in its "sad reality" a much more serious affair than I had imagined, the result of my cogitations was, that I was a very unhappy boy, (I did not feel the smallest inclination to boast myself *man* at that moment,) and that, if something very much to my advantage did not turn up in the course of the next twenty-four hours, my friends would have the melancholy satisfaction of depositing a broken heart (which, on the principle of the Kilkenny cats, was all I expected would remain of me by that time) in an early grave. Hereabouts my feelings becoming too many for me at the thought of my own funeral, I fairly gave up the struggle, and, bursting into a flood of tears, cried myself to sleep, like a child.

CHAPTER II.

LOSS AND GAIN.

"And youthful still, in your doublet and hose, this raw rheumatic day?"

"His thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer, he kept not time. * * * Convey, the wise call it. Steal! foh! a fico for the phrase!"—*Shakspeare.*

"From *Greenland's* icy mountains."—*Heber.*

Amongst the minor phenomena which are hourly occurring in the details of every-day life, although we are seldom sufficiently close observers to perceive them, there is none more remarkable than the change wrought in our feelings and ideas by a good night's rest; and never was this change more strikingly exemplified than on the present occasion. I had fallen asleep in the act of performing the character of chief-mourner at my own funeral, and I awoke in the highest possible health and spirits, with a strong determination never to "say die" under any conceivable aspect affairs might assume. "What in the world," said I to myself, as I sprang out of bed and began to dress,—"what in the world was there for me to make myself so miserable about last night? Suppose Cumberland and Lawless should laugh at, and tease me a little at first, what does it signify? I must take it in good part as long as I can, and if that does not do, I must speak seriously to them—tell them they really annoy me and make me uncomfortable, and then, of course, they will leave off. As to Coleman, I am certain——Well, it's very odd!"—This last remark was elicited by the fact, that a search I had been making for some minutes, in every place possible and impossible, for that indispensable article of male attire, my trowsers, had proved wholly ineffectual, although I had a distinct recollection of having placed them carefully on a chair by my bedside the previous night. There, however, they certainly were not now, nor, as far as I could discover, anywhere else in the room. Under these circumstances, ringing the bell for Thomas seemed advisable, as it occurred to me that he had probably abstracted the missing garment for the

purpose of brushing. In a few moments he answered the summons, and, with a face bright from the combined effects of a light heart and a severe application of yellow soap, inquired, "if I had rung for my shaving-water?"

"Why, no—I do not—that is, it was not—I seldom shave of a morning; for the fact is, I have no beard to shave as yet."

"Oh, sir, that's no reason; there's Mr. Coleman's not got the leastest westige of a hair upon his chin, and he's been mowing away with the greatest of persewerance for the last six months, and sends his rashier to be ground every three weeks, regilar, in order to *get* a beard—but what can I do for you, sir?"

"Why," replied I, trying to look grave, "it's very odd, but I have lost—that is, I can't find—my trowsers anywhere. I put them on this chair last night, I know."

"Umph! that's sing'lar, too; I was just a coming up stairs to brush 'em for you; you did not hear anybody come into your room after you went to bed, did you, sir?"

"No; but then I was so tired—I slept as sound as a top."

"Ah! I shouldn't much wonder if Mr. Coleman knew something about 'em: perhaps you had better put on another pair, and, if I can find 'em, I'll bring 'em back after breakfast."

This was very good advice, and therefore, of course, impossible to follow; for, on examining my trunk, lo and behold! dress pantaloons, white ducks, "*et hoc genus omne*," had totally disappeared, and I seemed to stand a very good chance of making my first appearance at my tutor's breakfast table in an extemporary "kilt," improvised for the occasion, out of two towels and a checked neck-cloth. In this extremity, Thomas, as a last resource, knocked at Coleman's door, informing him that I should be glad to speak to him—a proceeding speedily followed by the appearance of that gentleman in *propriâ personâ*.

"Good morning, Fairlegh! hope you slept well. You are looking cold; had not you better get some clothes on? Mildman will be down in a minute, and there will be a pretty row if we are not all there; he's precious particular, I can tell you."

"That is exactly what I want to do," replied I; "but the fact is, somebody has taken away all my trowsers in the night."

"Bless me! you don't say so? Another case of pilfering! this is getting serious: I will call Lawless—I say, Lawless!"

"Well, what's the row?" was the reply. "Have the French landed? or is the kitchen chimney on fire? eh! What do I be-

hold! Fairlegh, lightly and elegantly attired in nothing but his shirt, and Thomas standing like Niobe, the picture of woe! Here's a sight for a father!"

"Why, it's a bad job," said Coleman; "do you know, here's another case of pilfering; Fairlegh has had all his trowsers stolen in the night."

"You don't say so!" rejoined Lawless: "what is to be done? It must be stopped somehow: we had better tell him all we know about it. Thomas, leave the room."

Thomas obeyed, giving me a look of great intelligence, the meaning of which, however, I was totally at a loss to conceive, as he went; and Lawless continued,—

"I am afraid you will hardly believe us—it is really a most unheard-of thing—but we have lately missed a great many of our clothes, and we have every reason to suspect (I declare I can scarcely bear to mention it) that Mildman takes them himself, fancying, of course, that, placed by his position so entirely above suspicion, he may do it with impunity. We have suspected this for some time; and lately one or two circumstances—old clothesmen having been observed leaving his study, a pawn-ticket falling out of his waistcoat pocket one day as he went out of our parlour, &c.—have put the matter beyond a doubt; but he has never gone to such an extent as this before. Mind you don't mention a word of this to Thomas, for, bad as Mildman is, one would not wish to show him up before his own servant."

"Good gracious!" cried I, "but you are joking, it never can be really true!" Reading, however, in the solemn, not to say distressed, expression of their faces, indisputable evidence of the reality of the accusation, I continued—"I had no idea such things ever could take place, and he a clergyman, too!—dreadful! but what in the world am I to do? I have not got a pair of trowsers to put on. Oh! if he would but have taken anything else, even my watch, instead, I should not have minded—what shall I do?"

"Why really," replied Coleman, "it is not so easy to advise: you can't go down as you are, that's certain. Suppose you were to wrap yourself up in a blanket, and go and tell him you have found him out, and that you will call a policeman if he does not give you your clothes instantly; have it out with him fairly, and check the thing effectually once for all—eh?"

"No, that won't do," said Lawless. "I should say, sit down quietly (how cold you must be!) and write him a civil note, say-

ing, that you had reason to believe he had borrowed your trowsers (that's the way I should put it), and that you would be very much gratified by his lending you a pair to wear to-day; and then you can stick in something about your having been always accustomed to live with people who were very particular in regard to dress, and that you are sorry you are obliged to trouble him for such a trifle; in fact, do a bit of the respectful, and then pull up short with 'obedient pupil,' &c."

"Ay, that's the way to do it," said Coleman, "in the shop-fellow's style, you know—much obliged for past favours, and hope for a continuance of the same—more than *you* do, though, Fairlegh, I should fancy; but there goes the bell—I am off," and away he scudded, followed by Lawless humming—

> "Brian O'Lynn had no breeches to wear,
> So he took an old catskin, and made him a pair."

Here was a pretty state of things: the breakfast bell had rung, and I, who considered being too late a crime of the first magnitude, was unable even to begin dressing from the melancholy fact that every pair of trowsers I possessed in the world had disappeared; while, to complete my misery, I was led to believe the delinquent who had abstracted them was no less a person than the tutor, whom I had come fully prepared to regard with feelings of the utmost respect and veneration.

However, in such a situation, thinking over my miseries was worse than useless; *something* must be done at once—but what? Write the note, as Lawless had advised? No, it was useless to think of that; I felt I *could* not do it. "Ah! a bright idea!—I'll try it." So, suiting the action to the word, I rang the bell, and then jumping into bed, muffled myself up in the bed-clothes.

"Well, sir, have you found them?" asked Thomas, entering.

"No, Thomas," replied I dolefully, "nor ever shall, I fear; but will you go to Dr. Mildman, and tell him, with my respects, that I cannot get up to breakfast this morning, and, if he asks what is the matter with me, say that I am prevented from coming down by *severe cold*. I am sure that is true enough," added I, shivering.

"Well, sir, I will, if you wish it; but I don't exactly see the good of it; you *must* get up some time or other."

"I don't know," replied I, gloomily, "we shall see; only do you take my message."

And he accordingly left the room, muttering as he did so, "Well,

I calls this a great deal too bad, and I'll tell master of it myself, if nobody else won't."

"Tell master of it himself!"—he also suspected him then. This crushed my last faint hope that, after all, it might turn out to be only a trick of the pupils; and, overpowered by the utter vileness and depravity of him who was set in authority over me, I buried my face in the pillow, feeling a strong inclination to renew the lamentations of the preceding night. Not many minutes had elapsed, when the sound of a heavy footstep slowly ascending the stairs attracted my attention. I raised my head, and beheld the benevolent countenance (for even then it certainly *did* wear a benevolent expression) of my wicked tutor, regarding me with a mingled look of scrutiny and pity.

"Why, Fairlegh, what's all this?—Thomas tells me you are not able to come down to breakfast; you are not ill, I hope?"

"No, sir," replied I, "I don't think I am very ill, but I *can't* come down to breakfast."

"Not ill, and yet you can't come down to breakfast! pray, what in the world prevents you?"

"Perhaps," said I (for I was becoming angry at what I considered his unparalleled effrontery, and thought I would give him a hint that he could not deceive me so easily as he seemed to expect), "perhaps you can tell that better than I can."

"I, my boy!—I am afraid not; my pretensions to the title of doctor are based on divinity, not physic:—however, put out your tongue—that's right enough; let me feel your hand—a little cold or so, but nothing to signify; did this kind of seizure ever happen to you at home?"

Well, this was adding insult to injury with a vengeance; not content with stealing my clothes himself, but actually asking me whether such things did not happen at home! The wretch! thought I; does he suppose that everybody is as wicked as himself?

"No," I answered, my voice trembling with the anger I was scarcely able to repress; "no, sir, such a thing never could happen in my dear father's house."

"There, don't agitate yourself; you seem excited: perhaps you *had* better lie in bed a little longer; I will send you up something warm, and after that you may feel more inclined to get up," said he kindly, adding to himself as he left the room, "Very strange boy—I can't make him out at all."

The door closed, and I was once more alone. "Is he guilty or

not guilty?" thought I; "if he really has taken the clothes, he is the most accomplished hypocrite I ever heard of; yet he *must* have done so, everything combines to prove it—Thomas's speech—nay, even his own offer of sending me 'something warm;' something warm, indeed! what do I want with anything warm, except my trowsers?" No! the fact was beyond dispute; they were gone, and he had stolen them, whilst I, unhappy youth, was entirely in his power, and had not therefore a chance of redress. "But I will not bear it," cried I, "I'll write to my father—I'll run away—I'll——"

"Hurra!" shouted Thomas, rushing into the room with his arm full of clothes, "here they are, sir! I have found the whole kit of them at last."

"Where?" exclaimed I eagerly.

"Where? why in such a queer place!" replied he, "stuffed up the chimbley in master's study; but I have given them a good brushing, and they are none the worse for it, except them blessed white ducks; they are a'most black ducks now, though they will wash, so that don't signify none."

"Up the chimney, in master's study!" here was at last proof positive; my clothes had been actually found in his possession—oh, the wickedness of this world!

"But how did you ever find them?" asked I.

"Why! I happened to go in to fetch something, and I see'd a little bit of the leg of one of them hanging down the chimbley, so I guessed how it all was, directly. I think I know how they got there, too; they did not walk there by themselves, I should say."

"I wish they had," muttered I.

"I thought *somebody* was up too early this morning to be about any good," continued he; "he is never out of bed till the last moment, without there's some mischief in the wind."

This was pretty plain speaking, however. Thomas was clearly as well aware of his master's nefarious practices as the pupils themselves, and Lawless's amiable desire to conceal Dr. Mildman's sins from his servant's knowledge was no longer of any avail. I hastened, therefore (the only reason for silence being thus removed), to relieve my mind from the burden of just indignation which was oppressing it.

"And can you, Thomas," exclaimed I, with flashing eyes, "remain the servant of a man who dares thus to outrage every law, human and divine? one who, having taken upon himself the sacred

office of a clergyman of the Church of England, and so made it his especial duty to set a good example to all around him, can take advantage of the situation in which he is placed in regard to his pupils, and actually demean himself by purloining the clothes of the young men (I felt five-and-twenty at the very least at that moment) committed to his charge?—why, my father"——

What I imagined my father would have said or done under these circumstances, was fated to remain a mystery, as my eloquence was brought to a sudden conclusion by my consternation, when a series of remarkable phenomena, which had been developing themselves during my harangue in the countenance of Thomas, terminated abruptly in what appeared to me a fit of most unmitigated insanity. A look of extreme astonishment, which he had assumed at the beginning of my speech, had given place to an expression of mingled surprise and anger as I continued; which again in its turn had yielded to a grin of intense amusement, growing every moment broader and broader, accompanied by a spasmodic twitching of his whole person; and, as I mentioned his master's purloining my trowsers, he suddenly sprang up from the floor nearly a yard high, and commenced an extempore *pas seul* of a Jim Crow character, which he continued with unabated vigour during several minutes. This "*Mazourka d'ecstase*," or whatever a ballet-master would have called it, having at length, to my great joy, concluded, the performer of it sank exhausted into a chair, and regarding me with a face still somewhat the worse for his late violent exertions, favoured me with the following geographical remark:—

"Well, I never did believe in the existence of sich a place as Greenland before, but there's nowhere else as you could have come from, sir, I am certain."

"Eh! why! what's the matter with you? have I done anything particularly 'green,' as you call it? what are you talking about?" said I, not feeling exactly pleased at the reception my virtuous indignation had met with.

"Oh! don't be angry, sir; I am sure I did not mean to offend you; but really I could not help it, when I heard you say about master's having stole your things. Oh, lor!" he added, holding his sides with both hands, "how my precious sides do ache, sure-ly!"

"Do you consider that any laughing matter?" said I, still in the dark.

"Oh! don't, sir, don't say it again, or you will be the death of me," replied Thomas, struggling against a relapse, "why, bless your

innocence, what could ever make you think master would take your clothes?"

"Make me think? why, Lawless told me so," answered I, "and he also said it was not the first time such a thing had occurred either."

"You'll have enough to do, sir, if you believe all our young gents tell you; why, master would as soon think of flying as of stealing anything. It was Mr. Coleman as put them up the chimbley; he's always a playing some trick or another for everlasting."

A pause ensued, during which the whole affair in its true bearings became for the first time clear to my mind's eye; the result of my cogitations may be gathered from the following remark, which escaped me as it were involuntarily—"What a confounded ass I have made of myself, *to be sure!*"

Should any of my readers be rude enough to agree with me in this particular, let them reflect for a moment on the peculiar position in which I was placed. Having lived from childhood in a quiet country parsonage, with my father and mother, and a sister younger than myself, as my sole companions, "mystification"—that is, telling deliberate falsehoods by way of a joke—was a perfectly novel idea to me; and, when that joke involved the possibility of such serious consequences as offending the tutor under whose care we were placed, I (wholly ignorant of the impudence and recklessness of public school boys) considered such a solution of the mystery inconceivable. Moreover, everything around me was so strange, and so entirely different to the habits of life in which I had been hitherto brought up, that for the time my mind was completely bewildered. I appeared to have lost my powers of judgment, and to have relapsed, as far as intellect was concerned, into childhood again. My readers must excuse this digression, but it appeared to me necessary to explain how it was possible for a lad of fifteen to have been made the victim of such a palpably absurd deception, without its involving the necessity of his not being "so sharp as he should be."

The promised "something warm" made its appearance ere long, in the shape of tea and toast, which, despite my alarming seizure, I demolished with great gusto in bed (for I did not dare to get up), feeling, from the fact of my having obtained it under false pretences, very like a culprit all the while. Having finished my breakfast, and allowed sufficient time to elapse for my recovery, I got up, and, selecting a pair of trowsers which appeared to have suffered less

from their sojourn in the chimney than the others, dressed myself, and soon after eleven o'clock made my appearance in the pupils' room, where I found Dr. Mildman seated at his desk, and the pupils apparently very hard at work.

"How do you find yourself now you are up, Fairlegh?" inquired my tutor kindly.

"Quite well, sir, thank you," I replied, feeling like an impostor.

"Quite recovered?" continued he.

"Everything—entirely, I mean," stammered I, thinking of my trowsers.

"That's well, and now let us see what kind of a Latin and Greek lining you have got to your head."

So saying, without appearing to notice the tittering of the pupils, he pointed to a seat by his side, and commenced what I considered a very formidable examination, with the view of eliciting the extent of my acquaintance with the writers of antiquity, which proved to be extremely select. When he had thoroughly satisfied (or dissatisfied) himself upon this point, he recommended Horace and Xenophon to my particular notice, adding, that Coleman was also directing his attention to the sayings and doings of the same honourable and learned gentlemen—and that, therefore, we were to work together. He then explained to me certain rules and regulations of his establishment, to which he added a few moral remarks, conveying the information, that, if I always did exactly what he considered right, and scrupulously avoided everything he deemed wrong, I might relieve my mind from all fears of his displeasure, which was, to say the least, satisfactory, if not particularly original.

Exactly as the clock struck one, Dr. Mildman left the room (the morning's "study," as it was called, ending at that hour), leaving us our own masters till five, at which time we dined. Lest any kind reader should fancy we were starved, let me add, that at half-past one a substantial luncheon was provided, of which we might partake or not as we pleased. As well as I remember, we generally did graciously incline towards the demolition of the viands, unless "metal more attractive" awaited us elsewhere—but I am digressing.

CHAPTER III.

A COLD-WATER CURE FOR THE HEARTACHE.

"Oh! grief for words too deep,
From all his loved ones parted,
He could not choose but weep,
He was so lonely-hearted."
—*Shortfellow.*

"How does the water come down at Lodore?
* * * * * *
Dashing and flashing, and splashing and clashing,
All at once and all o'er, with a mighty uproar,
And this way the water comes down at Lodore."
—*Southey.*

"PRAY, Fairlegh, what did you mean by not coming down till eleven o'clock?" asked Cumberland in an angry tone.

"Did its mamma say it was always to have its breakfast in bed, a dear?" sneered Lawless.

"When she fastened that pretty square collar round its neck," chimed in Coleman.

"Just like a great gal," added Mullins.

"Mildman was exceedingly angry about it, I can tell you," continued Cumberland, "and desired me to speak seriously to you on the subject; such abominable idleness is not to be tolerated."

"It was not idleness," answered I, warmly; "you all know, very well, why I could not come down, and I don't think it was at all right or kind of you to play me such a trick."

"Eh—now don't say that—you will hurt my feelings; I declare it is quite affecting," said Coleman, wiping his eyes with Mullins's handkerchief, of which he had just picked his pocket.

"I'd have given five pounds to have seen old Sam's phiz, when he was trying to make out what ailed young stupid here, whether he was really ill, or only shamming," said Lawless; "depend upon it, he thinks it was all pretence, and he can't bear anything of that sort; that was why he began spinning him that long yarn about 'meriting his approbation by upright and straightforward conduct,' this morning. I saw what the old boy was aiming at in a minute; there's nothing puts him out so much as being deceived."

"Won't he set him all the hard lines to construe? that's all," said Mullins.

"It will be 'hard lines' upon him if he does," observed Coleman.

"Hold your tongue, Freddy! your puns are enough to make one ill," said Cumberland.

"Well, I don't know whether you are going to stand here all day baiting young pinafore, Cumberland?" interrupted Lawless; "I'm not, for I've got a horse waiting for me down at Snaffles's, and I am going to ride over to Hookley; there's a pigeon-match coming off to-day between Clayton, of the lancers—(he was just above me at Eton, you know)—and Tom Horton, who won the great match at Finchley, and I have backed Clayton pretty heavily—shall you come?"

"No," replied Cumberland, "no, I am going down to F—— Street."

"As usual, the board of green cloth, eh? you will go there once too often, if you don't mind, old fellow."

"That's my look out," replied Cumberland.

And away they went to their different pursuits, each, as he left the room, making me a very low obeisance; Coleman taking the trouble to open the door again after he had gone out, to beg, "that, if I were going to write to my mother, I would tell her, with his love, that she need not make herself in the least uneasy, as *he had quite* got over his last little attack." In a few minutes they had all quitted the house, and I remained the sole tenant of the pupils' room.

Many a long year has passed over my head since the day I am now describing, and each (though my life has been on the whole as free from care as that of most of the sons of Adam) has brought with it some portion of sorrow or suffering, to temper the happiness I have enjoyed, and teach me the much required lesson, that "here we have no abiding place." I have lived to see bright hopes fade —high and noble aspirations fall to the ground, checked by the sordid policy of worldly men—and the proud hearts which gave them birth become gradually debased to the level of those around them, or break in the unequal struggle—and these things have pained me. I have beheld those dear to me stretched upon the bed of sickness, and taken from me by the icy hand of death; and have deemed, as the grave closed over them, that my happiness, as far as this world was concerned, was buried with them. I have

known (and this was grief indeed) those loved with all the warm and trustful confidence of youth, prove false and unworthy of such deep affection; and have wished, in the bitterness of my soul, that the pit had shut her mouth upon me also, so I had but died with my faith in them unshaken. Still, although such sorrows as these may have produced a more deep and lasting effect, I do not remember ever to have felt more thoroughly desolate than upon the present occasion. The last scene, though trifling in itself, had made a great impression upon me, from the fact, that it proved, as I considered, the animus of the pupils towards me. "Every man's hand was against me." Even the oaf Mullins might insult me with impunity; secure that, in so doing, if in nothing else, he would be supported by the rest. Then I had offended my tutor, all my predilections in whose favour had returned with double force, since I had satisfied myself that he was not addicted to the commission of petty larceny; offended him by allowing him to suppose that I had practised a mean deception upon him. Moreover, it was impossible to explain my conduct to him without showing up Coleman, an extreme measure for which I was by no means prepared. Besides, every one would think, if I were to do so, that I was actuated by a paltry spirit of malice, and that would have been worse to bear than anything. No—turn my gaze to whichever side I would, the horizon seemed alike clouded; there was no comfort for me anywhere. I looked at my watch—two o'clock! Three long hours to dinner time, in which I might do what I liked. *What I liked!* there was mockery in the very sound. What was there for me to do? go out and see more new faces looking coldly on me, and wander up and down in strange places alone, amidst a crowd? No! I had not the heart to do that. Sit down, and write home, and by telling them how miserable I was, render them unhappy too?—that was worst of all. At length I found a book, and began reading as it were mechanically, but so little was I able to fix my attention, that, had I been questioned at the end of the time as to the subject of the work I had been perusing, I should have been utterly at a loss for an answer. I had fairly given it up as hopeless, and closed the book, when I heard footsteps in the passage, followed by the sudden apparition of the ever-smiling Mr. Frederick Coleman, who, closing the door after him, accosted me as follows:—

"What, Fairlegh, all in the downs, old fellow?—'never say die!'—come, be jolly—look at me."

As he said this, I involuntarily raised my eyes to his features, and

certainly, if ever there were a face formed for banishing blue devils by a glance, it was his. It was a round face, not remarkable for beauty of outline, inasmuch as it bore a strong resemblance to that of the gentleman on the blue China plates, in two pigtails and a petticoat, who appears to pass a mild ornithological and botanical existence in studying intently certain fishy-looking birds, and a cannon ball tree, which form the leading features of the landscape in his vicinity. With regard to expression, however, Coleman had a decided advantage over the Chinese horticulturist, for, whereas the countenance of the latter gentleman expresses (if indeed it can be said to express anything) only meek astonishment, Coleman's small black eyes danced and sparkled with such a spirit of mischief and devilry, while such a fund of merriment, and, as it now for the first time struck me, of good nature also, lurked about the corners of his mouth, that it seemed impossible to look at him without feeling that there was something contagious in his hilarity.

"Why," said I, "everything here is so new to me, so entirely different from all I have been accustomed to before, and the unkind —that is, the odd way in which Lawless and the rest of you seem to behave to me, treating me as if you thought I was either a fool or a baby—it all seems so strange, that I confess I am not over happy."

"Precious odd if you were, I think," replied Coleman; "and it was a horrid shame of me to hide your trowsers as I did this morning. Oh! how delightfully miserable you did look, as you stood shivering up in the cold! I'm sorry for it now, but I'm such a chap for a bit of fun, that if a trick like that comes into my head, do it I must. Oh! I get into no end of scrapes that way! Why it was but the other day I put a piece of cobbler's wax on the seat of Mildman's chair, and ruined his best Sunday-going sit-upons; he knew, too, who did it, I'm sure, for the next day he gave me a double doze of Euclid, to take the nonsense out of me, I suppose. He had better mind what he's at, though! I have got another dodge ready for him if he does not take care! But I did not mean to annoy you: you behaved like a brick, too, in not saying anything about it—I am really very sorry."

"Never mind," said I; "it's all right again now: I like a joke as well as anybody when I know it's only fun; the thing I am afraid of now is, that Dr. Mildman may think I wanted to deceive him, by pretending to be ill, when I was not."

"I daresay he has got a pretty good notion how it is," said Cole-

man, "but we'll get Thomas to tell him what I was up to, and that will set it all straight again."

"That will be very kind indeed," replied I; "but will not Dr. Mildman be angry with you about it?"

"Not he," said Coleman, "he never finds fault unless there's real necessity for it; he's as good a fellow as ever lived, is old Sam, only he's so precious slow."

"I am glad you like him, he seems so very kind and good-natured," said I, "just the sort of person one should wish one's tutor to be. But about Cumberland and Lawless; what kind of fellows are they when you come to know them?"

"Oh, you will like Lawless well enough when he gets tired of bullying you," replied Coleman; "though you need not stand so much of that as I was obliged to bear; you are a good head taller than I am—let's look at your arm; it would be all the better for a little more muscle, but that will soon improve. I'll put on the gloves with you for an hour or so every day."

"Put on the gloves!" repeated I; "how do you mean?—what has that to do with Lawless?"

"Oh, you muff! don't you understand?—of course, I mean the boxing-gloves; and when you know how to use your fists, if Lawless comes it too strong, slip into him."

"He must bully a good deal before I am driven to that," replied I; "I never struck a blow in anger in my life."

"You will see, before long," rejoined Coleman; "but at all events there's no harm in learning to use your fists; a man should always be able to defend himself if he is attacked."

"Yes, that's very true," observed I; "but you have not told me anything of Cumberland. Shall I ever like him, do you think?"

"Not if you are the sort of fellow I take you to be," replied he; "there's something about Cumberland not altogether right, I fancy; I'm not very straight-laced myself, particularly if there's any fun in a thing, not so much so as I should be, I suspect; but Cumberland is too bad even for me; besides, there's no fun in what he does, and then he's such a humbug—not straightforward and honest, you know. Lawless would not be half such a bully either, if Cumberland did not set him on. But don't you say a word about this to any one; Cumberland would be ready to murder me, or to get somebody else to do it for him—that's more in his way."

"Do not fear my repeating anything told me in confidence," re-

plied I; "but what do you mean when you say there's something wrong about Cumberland?"

"Do you know what Lawless meant by the 'board of green cloth' this morning?"

"No—it puzzled me."

"I will tell you then," replied Coleman, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, "the billiard table!"

After telling me this, Coleman, evidently fearing to commit himself further with one of whom he knew so little, turned the conversation, and finding it still wanted more than an hour to dinner, proposed that we should take a stroll along the shore together. In the course of our walk, I acquired the additional information that another pupil was expected in a few days—the only son of Sir John Oaklands, a baronet of large fortune in Hertfordshire; and that an acquaintance of Coleman's, who knew him, said he was a capital fellow, but very odd—though in what the oddity consisted did not appear. Moreover, Coleman confirmed me in my preconceived idea, that Mullins's genius lay at present chiefly in the eating, drinking, and sleeping line—adding that, in his opinion, he bore a striking resemblance to those somewhat dissimilar articles, a muff and a spoon. In converse such as this, the time slipped away, till we suddenly discovered that we had only a quarter of an hour left in which to walk back to Langdale Terrace, and prepare for dinner; whereupon a race began, in which my longer legs gave me so decided an advantage over Coleman, that he declared he would deliver me up to the tender mercies of the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," for what he was pleased to call "an aggravated case of over-driving a private pupil."

We had not more than five minutes left when we arrived at Dr. Mildman's door, Coleman affording a practical illustration of the truth of the aphorism, that "it is the pace that kills;" so that Thomas's injunction, "Look sharp, gentlemen," was scarcely necessary to induce us to rush up stairs two steps at a time. In the same hurry I entered my bed-room, without observing that the door was standing ajar rather suspiciously, for which piece of inattention, I was rewarded by a deluge of water, which wetted me from head to foot, and a violent blow on the shoulder, which stretched me on the ground in the midst of a puddle. That I may not keep the reader in suspense, I will at once inform him, that I was indebted for this agreeable surprise to the kindness and skill of Lawless, who, having returned from his pigeon-match half-an-

hour sooner than was necessary, had devoted it to the construction of what he called a "booby trap," which ingenious piece of mechanism was arranged in the following manner: The victim's room-door was placed ajar, and upon the top thereof a Greek Lexicon, or any other equally ponderous volume, was carefully balanced, and upon this was set in its turn a jug of water. If all these were properly adjusted, the catastrophe above described was certain to ensue when the door was opened.

"Fairly caught, by Jove," cried Lawless, who had been on the watch.

"By Jupiter Pluvius, you should have said," joined in Coleman, helping me up again; for so sudden and unexpected had been the shock, that I had remained for a moment just as I had fallen, with a kind of vague expectation that the roof of the house would come down upon me.

"I suppose I have to thank you for that," said I, turning to Lawless.

"Pray, don't mention it, Pinafore," was the answer; "what little trouble I had in making the arrangement, I can assure you, was quite repaid by its success."

"I'll certainly put on the gloves to-morrow," whispered I to Coleman—to which he replied by a sympathetic wink, adding—

"And now I think you had better get ready, more particularly as you will have to find out 'how to dress *jugged hair*,' as the cookery-books say."

By dint of almost superhuman exertions, I did just contrive to get down in time for dinner, though my unfortunate "jugged hair," which was anything but dry, must have presented rather a singular appearance. In the course of dinner, Dr. Mildman told us that we should have the whole of the next day to ourselves, as he was obliged to go to London on business, and should not return till the middle of the day following;—an announcement which seemed to afford great satisfaction to his hearers, despite an attempt made by Cumberland to keep up appearances, by putting on a look of mournful resignation, which, being imitated by Coleman, who, as might be expected, rather overdid the thing, failed most signally.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEREIN IS COMMENCED THE ADVENTURE OF THE MACINTOSH AND OTHER MATTERS.

"How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds,
Makes ill deeds done."

"Come tailor, let us see't;
Oh! mercy * * * What masking stuff is here?
What's this? a sleeve?"

"Disguise, I see; thou art a wickedness
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much."

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"—*Shakspeare.*

On returning to the pupils' room, Lawless commenced (to my great delight, as I thereby enjoyed a complete immunity from his somewhat troublesome attentions) a full, true, and particular account of the pigeon-match, in which his friend Clayton had, with unrivalled skill, slain a sufficient number of victims to furnish forth pies for the supply of the whole mess during the ensuing fortnight. At length, however, all was said that could be said, even upon this interesting subject, and the narrator casting his eyes around in search of wherewithal to amuse himself, chanced to espy my new writing-desk, a parting gift from my little sister Fanny, who, with the self-denial of true affection, had saved up her pocket-money during many previous months, in order to provide funds for this munificent present.

"Pinafore, is that desk yours?" demanded Lawless.

Not much admiring the *sobriquet* by which he chose to address me, I did not feel myself called upon to reply.

"Are you deaf, stupid? don't you hear me speaking to you?—where did you get that writing-desk?"

Still I did not answer.

"Sulky, eh? I shall have to lick him before long, I see. Here you, what's your name? Fairlegh, did your grandmother give you that writing-desk?"

"No," replied I, "my sister Fanny gave it to me the day before I left home."

"Oh, you have got a sister Fanny, have you? how old is she, and what is she like?"

"She is just thirteen, and she has got the dearest little face in the world," answered I, earnestly, as the recollection of her bright blue eyes and sunny smile came across me.

"How interesting!" sighed Coleman; "it quite makes my heart beat; you could not send for her, could you?"

"And she gave you that desk, did she?—how very kind of her," resumed Lawless, putting the poker in the fire.

"Yes, was it not?" said I, eagerly. "I would not have any harm happen to it for more than I can tell."

"So I suppose," replied Lawless, still devoting himself to the poker, which was rapidly becoming red-hot. "Have you ever," continued he, "seen this new way they have of ornamenting things? encaustic work, I think they call it:—it's done by the application of heat, you know."

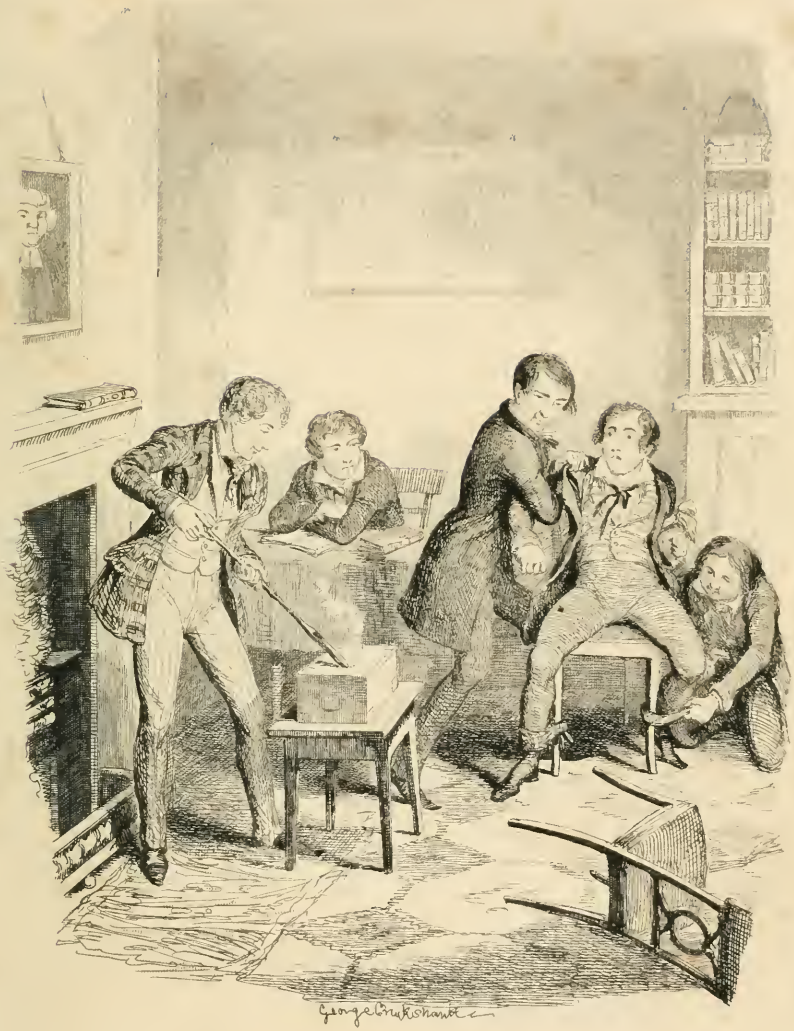
"I never even heard of it," said I.

"Ah! I thought not," rejoined Lawless. "Well, as I happen to understand the process, I'll condescend to enlighten your ignorance. Mullins, give me that desk."

"Don't touch it," cried I, bounding forward to the rescue; I won't have anything done to it."

My design was however frustrated by Cumberland and Lawless, who, both throwing themselves upon me at the same moment, succeeded, despite my struggles, in forcing me into a chair, where they held me, while Mullins, by their direction, with the aid of sundry neckcloths, braces, &c., tied me hand and foot; Coleman, who attempted to interfere in my behalf, receiving a push which sent him reeling across the room, and a hint that if he did not mind his own business he would be served in the same manner.

Having thus effectually placed me *hors de combat*, Lawless took possession of my poor writing-desk, and commenced tracing on the top thereof, with the red-hot poker, what he was pleased to term a "design from the antique," which consisted of a spirited outline of that riddle-loving female the Sphynx, as she appeared when dressed in top-boots and a wide-awake, and regaling herself with a choice cigar! He was giving the finishing touch to a large pair of moustaches, with which he had embellished her countenance, and which he declared was the only thing wanting to complete the likeness to an old aunt of Dr. Mildman's, whom the pupils usually designated by the endearing appellation of "Growler," when the


George Cruikshank

door opened, and Thomas announced that "Smithson" was waiting to see Mr. Lawless.

"Oh, yes, to be sure, let him come in; no, wait a minute. Here, you, Coleman and Mullins, untie Fairlegh; be quick:—confound that desk, how it smells of burning, and I have made my hands all black too. Well, Smithson, have you brought the things?"

The person to whom this query was addressed, was a young man, attired in the extreme of the fashion, who lounged into the room, with a "quite at home" kind of air, and nodding familiarly all around, arranged his curls with a ring-adorned hand, as he replied in a drawling tone—

"Ya'as, Mr. Lawless, we're all right,—punctual to a moment—always ready 'to come to time,' as we say in the ring."

"Who is he?" whispered I to Coleman.

"Who is he?" replied Coleman; "why, the best fellow in the world, to be sure. Not know Smithson, the prince of tailors, *the* tailor *par excellence!* I suppose you never heard of the Duke of Wellington, have you?"

I replied humbly, that I believe I had heard the name of that illustrious individual mentioned in connection with Waterloo and the Peninsula,—and that I was accustomed to regard him as the first man of the age.

"Aye, well then, Smithson is the second; though I really don't know whether he is not quite as great in his way as Wellington, upon my honour. The last pair of trowsers he made for Lawless were something sublime, too good for this wicked world, a great deal."

During this brief conversation, Smithson had been engaged in extricating a somewhat voluminous garment from the interior of a blue bag, which a boy, who accompanied him, had just placed inside the study door.

"There, this is the new invention I told you about; a man named Macintosh hit upon it. Now, with this coat on, you might stand under a water-fall without getting even damp. Try it on, Mr. Lawless;—just the thing, eh, gents?"

Our curiosity being roused by this panegyric, we gathered round Lawless to examine the garment which had called it forth. Such of my readers as recollect the first introduction of Macintoshes, will doubtless remember that the earlier specimens of the race differed very materially in form from those which are in use at the present day. The one we were now inspecting was of a whity-brown

colour, and, though it had sleeves like a coat, hung in straight folds from the waist to the ankles, somewhat after the fashion of a carter's frock, having huge pockets at the side, and fastening round the neck with a hook and eye.

"How does it do?" asked Lawless, screwing himself round in an insane effort to look at the small of his own back, a thing a man is certain to attempt when trying on a coat. "It does not make a fellow look like a Guy, does it?"

"No, I rather admire the sort of thing," said Cumberland.

"A jolly dodge for a shower of rain, and no mistake," put in Coleman.

"It's deucedly fashionable, really," said Smithson—"this one of yours, and one we made for Augustus Flare-away, Lord Fitz-scamper's son, the man in the guards, you know, are the only two out yet."

"I have just got it at the right time then," said Lawless; "I knew old Sam was going to town, so I settled to drive Clayton over to Woodend, in the tandem, to-morrow. The harriers meet there at eleven, and this will be the very thing to hide the leathers, and tops, and the green cut-away. I saw you at the match, by the bye, Smithey, this morning."

"Ya'as, I was there; did you see the thing I was on?"

"A bright bay, with a star on the forehead! a spicy looking nag enough; whose is it?"

"Why, young Robarts, who came into a lot of tin the other day, has just bought it; Snaffles charged him ninety guineas for it."

"And what is it worth?" asked Lawless.

"Oh! he would not do a dirty thing by any gent I introduced," replied Smithson. "*I* took young Robarts there: he merely made his fair profit out of it; he gave forty pounds for it himself to the man who bred it, only the week before, to my certain knowledge: it's a very sweet thing, and would carry him well, but he's afraid to ride it; that's how I was on it to-day. I'm getting it steady for him."

"A thing it will take you some time to accomplish, eh? A mount like that is not to be had for nothing, every day, is it?"

"Ya'as, you're about right there, Mr. Lawless; you're down to every move, I see, as usual. Any orders to-day, gents? your two vests will be home to-morrow, Mr. Coleman."

"Here, Smithson, wait a moment," said Cumberland, drawing him on one side; "I was deucedly unlucky with the balls this

morning," continued he in a lower tone, "can you let me have five-and-twenty pounds?"

"What you please, sir," replied Smithson, bowing.

"On the old terms, I suppose," observed Cumberland.

"All right," answered Smithson; "stay, I can leave it with you now," added he, drawing out a leather case; "oblige me by writing your name here—thank you."

So saying, he handed some bank notes to Cumberland, carefully replaced the paper he had received from him in his pocket-book, and withdrew.

"Smithey was in great force to-night," observed Lawless, as the door closed behind him—"nicely they are bleeding that young ass Robarts among them—he has got into good hands to help him to get rid of his money, at all events. I don't believe Snaffles gave forty pounds for that bay horse; he has got a decided curb on the off hock, if I ever saw one, and I fancy he's a little touched in the wind, too; and there's another thing I should say——"

What other failing might be attributed to Mr. Robarts' bay steed, we were, however, not destined to learn, as tea was at this moment announced. In due time followed evening prayers, after which we retired for the night. Being very sleepy, I threw off my clothes, and jumped hastily into bed, by which act I became painfully aware of the presence of what a surgeon would term "certain foreign bodies;" *i. e.* not, as might be imagined, sundry French, German, and Italian corpses, but various hard substances, totally opposed to one's preconceived ideas of the component parts of a feather-bed. Sleep being out of the question on a couch so constituted, I immediately commenced an active search, in the course of which I succeeded in bringing to light two clothes-brushes, a boot-jack, a pair of spurs, Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, and a brick-bat. Having freed myself from these undesirable bedfellows, I soon fell asleep, and passed (as it seemed to me) the whole night in dreaming that I was a pigeon, or thereabouts, and that Smithson, mounted on the top-booted Sphynx, was inciting Lawless to shoot at me with a red-hot poker.

As Coleman and I were standing at the window of the pupils' room, about ten o'clock on the following morning, watching the vehicle destined to convey Dr. Mildman to the coach-office, Lawless made his appearance, prepared for his expedition, with his hunting-costume effectually concealed under the new Macintosh.

"Isn't Mildman gone yet? Deuce take it, what a time he is! I ought to be off—I'm too late already!"

"They have not even put his carpet-bag in yet," said I.

"Well, I shall make a bolt, and chance it about his seeing me," exclaimed Lawless; "he'll only think I'm going out for a walk rather earlier than usual, if he does catch a glimpse of me, so here's off."

Thus saying, he placed his hat upon his head, with the air of a man determined to do or die, and vanished.

Fortune is currently reported to favour the brave, and so, to do her justice, she generally does; still, at the best of times, she is but a fickle jade, at all events she appeared determined to prove herself so in the present instance; for scarcely had Lawless got a dozen paces from the house, before Dr. Mildman appeared at the front door with his greatcoat and hat on, followed by Thomas bearing a carpet-bag and umbrella, and his attention being attracted by footsteps, he turned his head, and beheld Lawless. As soon as he perceived him, he gave a start of surprise, and pulling out his eye-glass (he was rather short-sighted), gazed long and fixedly after the retreating figure. At length, having apparently satisfied himself as to the identity of the person he was examining, he replaced his glass, stood for a moment as if confounded by what he had seen, and then turning abruptly, re-entered the house, and shut his study door behind him with a bang, leaving Thomas and the fly-driver mute with astonishment. In about five minutes he re-appeared, and saying to Thomas, in a stern tone, "Let that note be given to Mr. Lawless the moment he returns," got into the fly and drove off.

"There's a precious go," observed Coleman; "I wonder what's in the wind now. I have not seen old Sam get up the steam like that since I have been here. He was not half so angry when I put Thomas's hat on the peg where he hangs his own, and he, never noticing the difference, put it on, and walked to church in it, gold band and all."

"I wouldn't be Lawless for something," observed I; "I wonder what the note's about?"

"That's just what puzzles me," said Coleman. "I should have thought he had seen the sporting togs, but that's impossible; he must have a penetrating glance indeed, if he could see through that Macintosh."

"Lawless was too impatient," said Cumberland; "he should have waited a few minutes longer, and then Mildman would have gone

off without knowing anything about him. Depend upon it, the grand rule of life is to take things coolly, and wait for an opportunity: you have the game in your own hands then, and can take advantage of the follies and passions of others, instead of allowing them to avail themselves of yours."

"In plain English, cheat instead of being cheated," put in Coleman.

"You're not far wrong there, Freddy; the world is made up of knaves and fools—those who cheat, and those who are cheated—and I, for one, have no taste for being a fool," said Cumberland.

"Nor I," said Mullins; "I should not like to be a fool at all; I had rather be"——

"A butterfly," interrupted Coleman, thereby astonishing Mullins to such a degree, that he remained silent for some moments, with his mouth wide open as if in the act of speaking.

"You cannot mean what you say; you surely would not wish to cheat people," said I to Cumberland; "if it were really true that one must be either a knave or a fool, I'd rather be a fool by far—I'm sure you could never be happy if you cheated any one," continued I. "What does the Bible say about doing to others as you would have others do to you?"

"There, don't preach to me, you canting young prig," said Cumberland angrily, and immediately left the room.

"You hit him pretty hard then," whispered Coleman; "a very bad piece of business happened just before I came, about his winning a lot of tin from a young fellow here, at billiards, and they do say that Cumberland did not play fairly. It was rather unlucky your saying it; he will be your enemy from henceforth, depend upon it. He never forgets nor forgives a thing of that sort."

"I meant no harm by the remark," replied I; "I knew nothing of his having cheated any one; however, I do not care; I don't like him, and I'm just as well pleased he should not like me. But now, as my foreign relations seem to be rapidly assuming a warlike character (as the newspapers have it), what do you say to giving me a lesson in sparring, as you proposed, by way of preparation?"

"With all my heart," replied Coleman.

And accordingly the gloves were produced, and my initiatory lesson in the pugilistic art commenced by Coleman's first placing me in an exceedingly uncomfortable attitude, and then very considerately knocking me out of it again, thereby depositing me with much skill and science flat upon the hearth-rug. This manœuvre

he repeated with great success during some half hour or so, at the end of which time I began to discover the knack with which it was done, and proceeded to demonstrate the proficiency I was making, by a well-directed blow, which, being delivered with much greater force than I had intended, sent Coleman flying across the room. Chancing to encounter Mullins in the course of his transit, he overturned that worthy against the table in the centre of the apartment, which, yielding to their combined weight, fell over with a grand crash, dragging them down with it, in the midst of an avalanche of books, papers, and inkstands.

This *grand coup* brought, as might be expected, our lesson to a close for the day, Coleman declaring that such another hit would inevitably knock him into the middle of next week, if not farther, and that he really should not feel justified in allowing such a serious interruption to his studies to take place.

"And now, what are we going to do with ourselves?" asked I; "as this is a holiday, we ought to do something."

"Are you fond of riding?" inquired Coleman.

"Nothing I like better," replied I; "I have been used to it all my life; I have had a pony ever since I was four years old."

"I wish I was used to it," said Coleman. "My governor living in London, I never crossed a horse till I came here, and I'm a regular muff at it; but I want to learn. What do you say to a ride this afternoon?"

"Just the thing," said I, "if it is not too expensive for my pocket."

"Oh, no," replied Coleman; "Snaffles lets horses at as cheap a rate as any one, and good 'uns to go, too; does not he, Cumberland?"

"Eh, what are you talking about?" said Cumberland, who had just entered the room; "Snaffles? Oh yes, he's the man for horse flesh. Are you going to amuse yourself by tumbling off that fat little cob of his again, Fred?"

"I was thinking of having another try," replied Coleman; "what do you say, Fairlegh? Never mind the tin; I daresay you have got plenty, and can get more when that's gone."

"I have got a ten-pound note," answered I; but that must last me all this quarter: however, we'll have our ride to-day."

"I'll walk down with you," said Cumberland; "I'm going that way; besides, it's worth a walk any day to see Coleman mount; it took him ten minutes the last time I saw him, and then he threw the wrong leg over, so that he turned his face to the tail."

"*Scandalum magnatum!* not a true bill," replied Coleman. "Now, come along, Fairlegh, let's get ready, and be off."

During our walk down to Snaffles' stables, Cumberland (who seemed entirely to have forgotten my *mal à propos* remark) talked to me in a much more amiable manner than he had yet done; and the conversation naturally turning upon horses and riding, a theme always interesting to me, I was induced to enter into sundry details of my own exploits in that line. We reached the livery stables just as I had concluded a somewhat egotistical relation concerning a horse which a gentleman in our neighbourhood had bought for his invalid son, but which proving at first too spirited, I had undertaken to ride every day for a month, in order to get him quiet; a feat I was rather proud of having satisfactorily accomplished.

"Good morning, Mr. Snaffles; is Punch at home?" asked Coleman of a stout red-faced man, attired in a bright green Newmarket coat and top boots.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Lawless told me your governor was gone to town, so I kept him in, thinking perhaps you would want him."

"That's all right," said Coleman; "and here's my friend, Mr. Fairlegh, will want a nag too."

"Proud to serve any gent as is a friend of yours, Mr. Coleman," replied Snaffles, with a bob of his head towards me, intended as a bow. "What stamp of horse do you like, sir? Most of my cattle are out with the harriers to-day."

"Snaffles, a word with you," interrupted Cumberland.

"One moment, sir," said Snaffles to me, as he crossed over to where Cumberland was standing.

"Come and look at Punch; and let's hear what you think of him," said Coleman, drawing me towards the stable.

"What does Cumberland want with that man?" asked I.

"What, Snaffles? I fancy he owes a bill here, and I daresay it is something about that."

"Oh, is that all?" rejoined I.

"Why, what did you think it was?" inquired Coleman.

"Never mind," I replied; "let's look at Punch."

And accordingly I was introduced to a little fat, round, jolly-looking cob, about fourteen hands high, who appeared to me an equine counterpart of Coleman himself. After having duly praised and patted him, I turned to leave the stable, just as Cumberland and Snaffles were passing the door, and I caught the following words from the latter, who appeared rather excited:—

"Well, if any harm comes of it, Mr. Cumberland, you'll remember it's your doing, not mine."

Cumberland's reply was inaudible, and Snaffles turned to me, saying—

"I've only one horse at home likely to suit you, sir; you'll find her rather high-couraged, but Mr. Cumberland tells me you won't mind that."

"I have been mentioning what a good rider you *say* you are," said Cumberland, laying a slight emphasis on the *say*.

"Oh, I daresay she will do very well," replied I. "I suppose she has no vice about her."

"Oh dear, no," said Snaffles, "nothing of the sort.—James,' added he, calling to a helper, "saddle the chestnut mare, and bring her out directly."

The man whom he addressed, and who was a fellow with a good-humoured, honest face, became suddenly grave, as he replied in a deprecatory tone—

"The chestnut mare? Mad Bess, sir?"

"Don't repeat my words, but do as you are told," was the answer; and the man went away looking surly.

After the interval of a few minutes, a stable door opposite was thrown open, and Mad Bess made her appearance, led by two grooms. She was a bright chestnut, with flowing mane and tail, about fifteen-and-a-half hands high, nearly thorough-bred, and as handsome as a picture; but the restless motion of her eye disclosing the white, the ears laid back at the slightest sound, and a half-frightened, half-wild air, when any one went up to her, told a tale as to her temper, about which no one in the least accustomed to horses could doubt for an instant.

"That mare is vicious," said I, as soon as I had looked at her.

"Oh dear, no, sir, quiet as a lamb, I can assure you. Soh, girl! soh!" said Snaffles, in a coaxing tone of voice, attempting to pat her; but Bess did not choose to "soh," if by "soh-ing" is meant, as I presume, standing still and behaving prettily; for on her master's approach, she snorted, attempted to rear, and ran back, giving the men at her head as much as they could do to hold her.

"She's a little fresh to-day; she was not out yesterday, but it's all play, pretty creature! nothing but play," continued Snaffles.

"If you are afraid, Fairlegh, don't ride her," said Cumberland; but I fancied from your conversation you were a bold rider, and

did not mind a little spirit in a horse· you had better take her in again, Snaffles."

"Leave her alone," cried I, quickly (for I was becoming irritated by Cumberland's sneers, in spite of my attempt at self-control), "I'll ride her. I'm no more afraid than other people; nor do I mind a spirited horse, Cumberland; but that mare is more than spirited, she's ill-tempered—look at her eye!"

"Well, you had better not ride her, then," said Cumberland.

"Yes, I will," answered I, for I was now thoroughly roused, and determined to go through with the affair, at all hazards. I was always, even as a boy, of a determined, or, as ill-natured people would call it, obstinate disposition, and I doubt whether I am entirely cured of the fault at the present time.

"Please yourself; only mind, I have warned you not to ride her if you are afraid," said Cumberland.

"A nice warning," replied I, turning away;—"who'll lend me a pair of spurs?"

"I've got a pair here, sir; if you'll step this way I'll put them on for you," said the man whom I had heard addressed as "James," —adding, in a lower tone, as he buckled them on, "for Heaven's sake, young gentleman, don't mount that mare, unless you're a first-rate rider."

"Why, what's the matter with her? does she kick?" inquired I.

"She'll try and pitch you off, if possible, and if she can't do that, she'll bolt with you, and then the Lord have mercy upon you!"

This was encouraging, certainly!

"You are an honest fellow, James," replied I; "and I am much obliged to you. Ride her I must, my honour is at stake, but I'll be as careful as I can, and, if I come back safe you shall have half-a-crown."

"Thank you, sir," was the reply, "I shall be glad enough to see you come back in any other way than on a shutter, without the money."

Of a truth, the race of Job's comforters is not yet extinct, thought I, as I turned to look for Coleman, who had been up to this moment employed in superintending the operation of saddling Punch, and now made his appearance, leading that renowned steed by the bridle.

"Why, Fairlegh, you are not going to ride that vicious brute to be sure; even Lawless won't mount her, and he does not care what he rides in general."

"Never mind about Lawless," said I, assuming an air of confidence I was very far from feeling; "she won't eat me, I dare say."

"I don't know that," rejoined Coleman, regarding Mad Bess with a look of horror; "Cumberland, don't let him mount her."

"Nay, I can't prevent it; Fairlegh is his own master, and must do as he likes," was the answer.

"Come, we can't keep the men standing here the whole day," said I to Coleman; "mount Punch, and get out of my way, as fast as you can, if you are going to do so at all"—a request with which, seeing I was quite determined, he at length unwillingly complied, and having, after one or two failures, succeeded in throwing his leg over the cob's broad back, rode slowly out of the yard, and took up his station outside, in order to witness my proceedings.

"Now, then," said I, "keep her as steady as you can for a minute, and as soon as I am fairly mounted give her her head—stand clear there."

I then took a short run, and placing one hand on the saddle, while I seized a lock of the mane with the other, I sprang from the ground and vaulted at once upon her back, without the aid of the stirrup, a feat I had learned from a groom who once lived with us, and which stood me in good stead on the present occasion, as I thereby avoided a kick with which Mad Bess greeted my approach. I next took up the reins as gently as I could, the men let go her head, and after a little plunging and capering, though much less than I had expected, her ladyship gave up hostilities for the present, and allowed me to ride her quietly up and down the yard. I then wished Cumberland (who looked, as I thought, somewhat mortified), a good afternoon, turned a deaf ear to the eulogies of Mr. Snaffles and his satellites, and proceeded to join Coleman. As I left the yard my friend James joined me, under the pretence of arranging my stirrup leather, when he took the opportunity of saying—

"She'll go pretty well now you're once mounted, sir, as long as you can hold her with the snaffle, but if you are obliged to use the curb—look out for squalls!!!"

CHAPTER V.

MAD BESS.

"Away, away, my steed and I,
Upon the pinions of the wind,
All human dwellings left behind,
We sped like meteors through the sky.
* * * * * *
With glossy skin and dripping mane,
And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,
The wild steed's sinewy nerves still strain
Up the repelling bank.
We gained the top, a boundless plain
Spreads onward.
* * * * * *
My heart turned sick, my brain grew sore,
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more,
The sky spun like a mighty wheel,
* * * * * *
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
Which saw no farther."—*Mazeppa.*

Out of consideration for the excitable disposition of Mad Bess, we took our way along the least bustling streets we could select; directing our course towards the outskirts of the town, behind which extended for some miles a portion of the range of hills known as the South Downs, over the smooth green turf of which we promised ourselves a canter. As we rode along, Coleman questioned me as to what could have passed while he was seeing Punch saddled, to make me determine to ride the chestnut mare, whose vicious disposition was, he informed me, so well known, that not only would no one ride her who could help it, but that Snaffles, who was most anxious to get rid of her, had not as yet been able to find a purchaser. In reply to this I gave him a short account of what had occurred, adding my more than suspicion that the whole matter had been arranged by Cumberland, in which notion he entirely agreed with me.

"I was afraid of something of this sort, when I said I was sorry you had made that remark about cheating to him this morning—you see, he would no doubt suppose you had heard the particulars of his gambling affair, and meant to insult him by what you said,

and he has done this out of revenge. Oh, how I wish we were safely at home again; shall we turn back now?"

"Not for the world," said I—"you will find, when you know me better, that when once I have undertaken a thing, I *will* go through with it—difficulties only make me more determined."

"Ah!" said Coleman, "you should get somebody to write a book about you, that is the kind of disposition they always give to the heroes of novels, the sort of character that will go and run his head against a brick wall to prove that it is the harder and thicker of the two—they knock out their brains though, sometimes in doing it, when they happen to have any—it is very pretty to read about, splendid in theory, but I much doubt its acting so well if you come to put it in practice."

"You may laugh at me, if you please," replied I; "but, depend upon it, a man of energy and determination will undertake great deeds, aye, and perform them too, which your prudent, cautious character would have considered impossibilities."

"Perhaps it may be so," was the reply; "I know I am not the sort of stuff they cut heroes out of—woa, Punch! steady, old boy! holloa, what ails him? this is getting serious."

During this conversation, we had been gradually leaving the town behind us, and approaching the downs, and had arrived at a point where the road became a mere cart-track, and the open country lay spread for miles before us. Our two steeds, which had up to the present time conducted themselves with the greatest propriety, now began to show signs of excitement, and as the fresh air from the downs blew against their nostrils, they tossed their heads, snorted, and exchanged the quiet jog-trot pace at which we had been proceeding, for a dancing, sidelong motion, which somewhat disturbed Coleman's equanimity, and elicited from him the expressions above recorded. The road at the same time becoming uneven and full of ruts, we agreed to turn our horses' heads, and quit it for the more tempting path-way afforded by the green-sward. No sooner, however, did Punch feel the change from the hard road to the soft elastic footing of the turf, than he proceeded to demonstrate his happiness by slightly elevating his heels, and popping his head down between his forelegs, thereby jerking the rein loose in Coleman's hand; and, perceiving that his rider (who was fully employed in grasping the pommel of his saddle in order to preserve his seat) made no effort to check his vivacity, he indulged his high spirits still further by setting off at a brisk canter.

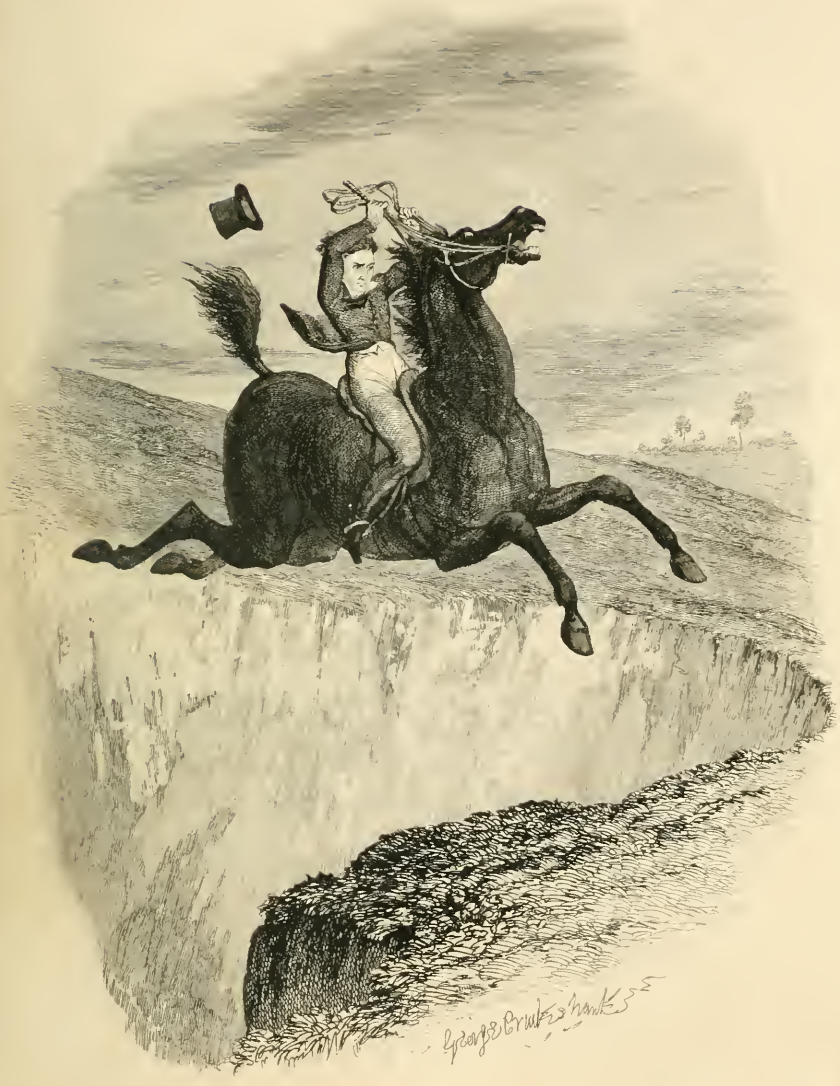
"Pull him in," cried I, "you'll have him run away with you; pull at him."

Whether my advice was acted upon or not I was unable to observe, as my whole attention was demanded by Mad Bess, who appeared at length resolved to justify the propriety of her appellation. Holding her in by means of the snaffle alone had been quite as much as I had been able to accomplish during the last ten minutes, and this escapade on the part of Punch brought the matter to a crisis. I must either allow her to follow him, *i. e.* to run away, or use the curb to prevent it. Seating myself, therefore, as firmly as I could, and gripping the saddle tightly with my knees, I took up the curb rein, which till now had been hanging loosely on the mare's neck, and gradually tightened it. This did not, for a moment, seem to produce any effect, but as soon as I drew the rein sufficiently tight to check her speed, she stopped short, and shook her head angrily. I attempted gently to urge her on,—not a step except backwards would she stir,—at length in despair I touched her slightly with the spur, and then "the fiend within her woke," and proceeded to make up for lost time with a vengeance. The moment the mare felt the spur, she reared until she stood perfectly erect, and fought the air with her forelegs. Upon this I slackened the rein, and striking her over the ears with my riding-whip, brought her down again;—no sooner, however, had her fore-feet touched the ground than she gave two or three violent plunges, which nearly succeeded in unseating me, jerked down her head so suddenly as to loosen the reins from my grasp, kicked viciously several times, and seizing the cheek of the bit between her teeth so as to render it utterly useless (evidently an old trick of hers), sprang forward at a wild gallop. The pace at which we were going soon brought us alongside of Punch, who, having by this time thoroughly mastered his rider, considered it highly improper that any steed should imagine itself able to pass him, and therefore proceeded to emulate the pace of Mad Bess. Thereupon a short but very spirited race ensued, the cob's pluck enabling him to keep neck and neck for a few yards; but the mare was going at racing speed, and the length of her stride soon began to tell; Punch, too, showed signs of having nearly had enough of it. I therefore shouted to Coleman, as we were leaving them, "Keep his head up hill, and you'll be able to pull him in directly." His answer was inaudible, but when I turned my head two or three minutes afterwards, I was glad to see that he had followed my advice with com-

plete success—Punch was standing still, about half a mile off, while his rider was apparently watching my course with looks of horror.

All anxiety on his account being thus at an end, I proceeded to take as calm a view of my own situation as circumstances would allow, in order to decide on the best means of extricating myself therefrom. We had reached the top of the first range of hills I have described, and were now tearing at a fearful rate down the descent on the opposite side. It was clear that the mare could not keep up the pace at which she was going for any length of time: still she was in first-rate racing condition, not an ounce of superfluous flesh about her, and, though she must have gone more than two miles already, she appeared as fresh as when we started. I therefore cast my eyes around in search of some obstacle which might check her speed. The slope down which we were proceeding extended for about a mile before us, after which the ground again began to rise. In the valley between the two hills was a small piece of cultivated land, enclosed (as is usual in the district I am describing) within a low wall, built of flint-stones from the beach. Towards this I determined to guide the mare as well as I was able, in the hope that she would refuse the leap, in which case I imagined I might pull her in. The pace at which we were going soon brought us near the spot, when I was glad to perceive that the wall was a more formidable obstacle than I had at first imagined, being fully six feet high, with a ditch in front of it. I therefore selected a place where the ditch seemed widest, got her head up by sawing her mouth with the snaffle, and put her fairly at it. No sooner did she perceive the obstacles before her, than, slightly moderating her pace, she appeared to collect herself, gathered her legs well under her, and rushing forward, cleared wall, ditch, and at least seven feet of ground beyond, with a leap like a deer, alighting safely with me on her back on the opposite side, where she continued her course with unabated vigour.

We had crossed the field (a wheat stubble) ere I had recovered from my astonishment at finding myself safe, after such a leap as I had most assuredly never dreamt of taking. Fortunately there was a low gate on the farther side, towards which I guided the mare, for though I could not check, I was in some measure able to direct her course. This time, however, she either did not see the impediment in her way, or despised it, as, without abating her speed, she literally rushed through the gate, snapping into shivers with her chest the upper bar, which was luckily rotten, and clearing the lower


George Cruikshank

ones in her stride. The blow, and the splintered wood flying about her ears, appeared to frighten her afresh, and she tore up the opposite ascent, which was longer and steeper than the last, like a mad creature. I was glad to perceive, however, that the pace at which she had come, and the distance (which must have been several miles), were beginning to tell—her glossy coat was stained with sweat and dust, while her breath, drawn with short and laboured sobs, her heaving flanks, and the tremulous motion of her limbs, afforded convincing proofs that the struggle could not be protracted much longer. Still she continued to hold the bit between her teeth as firmly as though it were in a vice, rendering any attempt to pull her in utterly futile. We had now reached the crest of the hill, when I was not best pleased to perceive that the descent on the other side was much more precipitous than any I had yet met with. I endeavoured, therefore, to pull her head round, thinking it would be best to try and retrace our steps, but I soon found that it was useless to attempt it. The mare had now become wholly unmanageable; I could not guide her in the slightest degree; and, though she was evidently getting more and more exhausted, she still continued to gallop madly forwards, as though some demon had taken possession of her, and was urging her on to our common destruction. As we proceeded down the hill, our speed increased from the force of gravitation, till we actually seemed to fly—the wind appeared to shriek as it rushed past my ears, while, from the rapidity with which we were moving, the ground seemed to glide from under us, till my head reeled so giddily that I was afraid I should fall from the saddle.

We had proceeded about half way down the descent, when, on passing one or two stunted bushes which had concealed the ground beyond, I saw, oh, horror of horrors! what appeared to be the mouth of an old chalk-pit, stretching dark and unfathomable right across our path, about 300 yards before us. The mare perceives it when too late, attempts to stop, but from the impetus with which she is going, is unable to do so. Another moment, and we shall be over the brink! With the energy of despair, I lifted her with the rein with both hands, and drove the spurs madly into her flanks;—she rose to the leap, there was a bound! a sensation of flying through the air! a crash! and I found myself stretched in safety on the turf beyond, and Mad Bess lying, panting, but uninjured, beside me.

To spring upon my feet, and seize the bridle of the mare, who

had also by this time recovered her footing, was the work of a moment. I then proceeded to look around, in order to gain a more clear idea of the situation in which I was placed, in the hope of discovering the easiest method of extricating myself from it. Close behind me lay the chalk-pit, and as I gazed down its rugged sides, overgrown with brambles and rank weeds, I shuddered to think of the probable fate from which I had been so almost miraculously preserved, and turned away with a heartfelt expression of thanksgiving to Him, who had mercifully decreed that the thread of my young life should not be snapped in so sudden and fearful a manner. Straight before me, the descent became almost suddenly precipitous, but a little to the right I perceived a sort of sheep-track, winding downwards round the side of the hill. It was a self-evident fact that this must lead somewhere, and as all places were alike to me, so that they contained any human beings who were able and willing to direct me towards Helmstone, I determined to follow it. After walking about half a mile, Mad Bess (with her ears drooping, and her nose nearly touching the ground) following me as quietly as a dog, I was rejoiced by the sight of curling smoke, and on turning a corner, I came suddenly upon a little village green, around which some half dozen cottages were scattered at irregular distances. I directed my steps towards one of these, before which a crazy sign, rendered by age and exposure to the weather as delightfully vague and unintelligible as though it had come fresh from the brush of Turner himself, hung picturesquely from the branch of an old oak.

The sound of horse's feet attracted the attention of an elderly man, who appeared to combine in his single person the offices of ostler, waiter, and boots, and who, as soon as he became aware of my necessities, proceeded to fulfil the duties of these various situations with the greatest alacrity. First (as of the most importance in his eyes), he rubbed down Mad Bess, and administered some refreshment to her in the shape of hay and water; then he brought me a glass of ale, declaring it would do me good (in which, by the way, he was not far from right). He then brushed from my coat certain stains, which I had contracted in my fall, and finally told me my way to Helmstone. I now remounted Mad Bess, who, though much refreshed by the hay and water, still continued perfectly quiet and tractable; and setting off at a moderate trot, reached the town, after riding about eight miles, without any further adventure, in rather less than an hour.

As I entered the street in which Snaffles' stables were situated, I perceived Coleman and Lawless standing at the entrance of the yard, evidently awaiting my arrival. When I got near them, Coleman sprang eagerly forward to meet me, saying—

"How jolly glad I am to see you safe again, old fellow! I was so frightened about you. How did you manage to stop her?"

"Why, Fairlegh, I had no idea you were such a rider," exclaimed Lawless; "I made up my mind you would break your neck, and old Sam be minus a pupil, when I heard you were gone out on that mare. You have taken the devil out of her somehow, and no mistake; she's as quiet as a lamb," added he, patting her.

"You were very near being right," replied I; "she did her best to break my neck and her own too, I can assure you."

I then proceeded to relate my adventures, to which both Lawless and Coleman listened with great attention; the former interrupting me every now and then with various expressions of commendation, and when I had ended, he shook me warmly by the hand, saying—

"I give you great credit; you behaved in a very plucky manner all through; I didn't think you had it in you; 'pon my word, I didn't. I shall just tell Cumberland and Snaffles a bit of my mind, too. Here, Snaffles, you confounded old humbug, where are you?"

"Oh, don't say anything to him," said I; "it's never worth while being angry with people of that kind; besides, Cumberland made him do it."

"That does not signify; he knew the danger to which he was exposing you, perhaps better than Cumberland did. He had no business to do it, and I'll make him beg your pardon before we leave this yard. Here, you ostler fellow, where's your master?" shouted Lawless, as he turned into the yard, where I soon heard the loud tones of his voice engaged in angry colloquy with Snaffles, whose replies were inaudible.

In a short time, the latter approached the spot where I was standing, and began a very long and humble apology, saying that he should never have thought of giving me the mare, if he had not seen at a glance that I was a first-rate rider, and much more to the same purpose, when Lawless interrupted him with—

"There, cut it short; Mr. Fairlegh does not want any more of your blarney; and mind, if anything of the sort occurs again, I shall hire my horses somewhere else, and take care to let all

my friends know why I do so. Now, let's be off; it's getting near dinner-time.

So saying, he turned to leave the yard, a movement which, as soon as I had found my friend James, returned his spurs, and given him the promised half-crown, I proceeded to imitate; and thus ended the episode of Mad Bess.

CHAPTER VI.

LAWLESS GETS THOROUGHLY PUT OUT.

* * * "What 'tis
To have a stranger come—
It seems you know him not!
No sir! not I."—*Southey.*

"Either forbare * * * or resolve you
For more amazement; if you can behold it,
I'll make the statue move indeed!"—*Winter's Tale.*

"Since the youth will not be entreated, his own peril on his forwardness * * * You shall try but one fall."—*As You Like It.*

On reaching home, the door was opened by Thomas, who accosted us with—

"Here's such a bit of fun, gentlemen! The new pupil's arrived, and ain't he a rum 'un, jest? Oh, I never!"

"Why, how do you mean? what's he like, then?" asked Lawless.

"Oh, he's very well to look at, only he's as tall as a life-guardsman; but he's sich a free and easy chap, and ain't he got a pretty good notion of making himself comfortable, too!—that's all. But come in, gents, you'll soon see what I mean. He chucked the fly-man who brought him here half-a-guinea, and when I asked him if he did not want the change, for the fare was only half-a-crown, he merely said 'Pooh!' and told me not to talk, for it tired him."

With our feelings of curiosity somewhat excited by this account, we hastened into the pupils' room, anxious to behold the individual who had so greatly astonished Thomas.

Seated in Dr. Mildman's arm-chair, and with his legs resting upon two other chairs, so arranged as to form a temporary sofa, reclined a young man, apparently about eighteen, though his length of limb, and the almost herculean proportions of his chest and shoulders, seemed rather to belong to a more advanced age. He raised his head as we entered, disclosing a set of features which, in spite of an expression of languor and indifference, must have been pronounced unusually handsome. His complexion was a rich nut-brown; the high forehead, white as snow, contrasting

well with the dark hue of his hair, which, in short clustering curls, harmonized well with the classical outline of his head, reminding one involuntarily of the young Antinous. The short curling upper lip, and well chiselled nostril, told a tale of pride and resolution, strongly at variance with the mild sleepy appearance of the large dark hazel eyes, to which the long silken lashes that shaded them imparted an almost feminine expression. He did not attempt to alter his position as we approached, but, merely turning his head, gazed at us stedfastly for a moment, and then observed in a slow, half-absent manner—

"Oh, the other pupils, I suppose—how do you do, all of you?"

Lawless, who was foremost, was so much surprised and so little pleased at this nonchalant style of address, that he made no reply, but turning on his heel, proceeded to leave the room, in order to divest himself of his hunting costume, muttering as he went, "Cool enough that, by Jove, eh!"

The duty of doing the polite having thus devolved upon Coleman, he winked at me by way of preliminary, and, making a low bow in the true dancing-master style, replied as follows:—

"Your penetration has not erred, Mr. Oaklands; we *are* the other pupils; and in answer to your obliging inquiries, I have much pleasure in informing you that we are all in perfect health and very tolerable spirits; and now, sir, in return for your kind condescension, allow me, in the absence of my superiors, to express a hope that *you* are feeling pretty comfortable—ahem!"

Having thus delivered himself, Coleman drew up his figure to its utmost height, and folding his arms with an air of pompous dignity, awaited an answer.

"Oh, yes, I'm comfortable enough," was the reply; I always am; only I'm so done up, tired as a dog—the least thing fatigues me; I'm as weak as a rat! Don't they give you sofas here, Mr. What's-your-name?'

"My name is Norval—I mean Coleman; my father divides his time between feeding his flocks on the Grampian Hills, and fleecing his clients in Lincoln's Inn; though I must confess that ever since I can remember, he has dropped the shepherd, and stuck to the solicitor, finding it pays best, I suppose. Regarding the sofa, we have not one at present, but Dr. Mildman went to town this morning; I did not till this moment know why. But now I see it all—he was doubtless aware you would arrive to-day, and finding he could not get a sufficiently comfortable sofa for you in Helmstone,

he is gone to London on purpose to procure one. There is still time to write by the post, if there is any particular way in which you would like to have the stuffing arranged."

This speech made Oaklands raise his head, and look Coleman so fixedly in the face, with such a clear, earnest, penetrating gaze, that it appeared as if he would read his very soul. Having apparently satisfied himself, he smiled slightly, resumed his former attitude, and observed in the same half sleepy tone—

"No, I'll leave all that to him; I am not particular. What time do you dine here?"

I replied (for the look I have described seemed to have had the wonderful effect of silencing Coleman), "At five o'clock."

"Very good; and I believe there's a Mrs. Mildman, or some such person, is there not? I suppose one must dress. Will you be so kind as to tell the servant to bring some hot water, and to look out my things for me at a quarter before five? I hate to be obliged to hurry, it tires one so."

Having said this, he took up a book which was lying by his side, and murmuring something about "talking being so fatiguing," soon became buried in its contents.

Whilst I was dressing for dinner, Lawless came into my room, and told me that he had been speaking to Cumberland with regard to the way in which he had behaved to me about the mare, and that Cumberland professed himself exceedingly sorry that the affair had so nearly turned out a serious one, declaring he meant it quite as a joke, never expecting that when I saw the mare, I should venture to mount her.

"So you see," continued Lawless, "he merely wanted to have a good laugh at you—nothing more. It was a thoughtless thing to do, but not so bad as you had fancied it, by any means."

"Well," replied I, "as he says so, I am bound to believe him; but his manner certainly gave me the impression that he intended me to ride her. He went the right way to make me do so, at all events, by hinting that I was afraid."

"Ah! he could not know that by intuition, you see," said Lawless; "he thought, I daresay, as I did, that you were a mere molly-coddle, brought up at your mother's apron-string, and had not pluck enough in you to do anything sporting."

"It's not worth saying anything more about," replied I; "it will never happen again: I am very much obliged to you, though."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Lawless; "if Cumberland had really

meant to break your neck, I should have fallen out with him; that would have been too much of a good thing: however, as it is, it's all right."

And so the conversation ended, though I felt far from satisfied in my own mind as to the innocence of Cumberland's intentions.

On reaching the drawing-room, I found the whole party assembled with the exception of Mr. Henry Oaklands, who had not yet made his appearance. At the moment of my entrance, Mrs. Mildman, who had not seen the new arrival, and who, like the rest of her sex, was somewhat curious, was examining Coleman (who stood bolt upright before her, with his hands behind him, looking like a boy saying his lesson), as to his manners and appearance.

"Very tall, and dark hair and large eyes," continued Mrs. Mildman; "why, he must be very handsome."

"He seems as if he were half asleep," observed I.

"Not always," said Coleman; "did you see the look he gave me? he seemed wide-awake enough then; I thought he was going to eat me."

"Dear me! why he must be quite a cannibal! besides, I don't think you would be at all nice to eat, Mr. Coleman," said Mrs. Mildman, with a smile.

"Horrid nasty, I'm sure," muttered Mullins, who was seated on the very edge of his chair, and looked thoroughly uncomfortable, as was his wont in anything like civilized society.

At this moment the door opened, and Oaklands entered. If one had doubted about his height before, when lying on the chairs, the question was set at rest the instant he was seen standing: he must have measured at least six feet two inches, though the extreme breadth of his chest and shoulders, and the graceful setting-on of his finely-formed head, together with the perfect symmetry and proportion of his limbs, prevented his appearing too tall. He went through the ceremony of introduction with the greatest ease and self-possession; and though he infused rather more courtesy into his manner towards Mrs. Mildman than he had taken the trouble to bestow on us, his behaviour was still characterized by the same indolence and listlessness I had previously noticed, and which indeed seemed part and parcel of himself. Having bowed slightly to Cumberland and Lawless, he seated himself very leisurely on the sofa by Mrs. Mildman's side, altering one of the pillows so as to make himself thoroughly comfortable as he did so. Having settled it to his satisfaction, he addressed Mrs. Mildman with—

"What a very fatiguing day this has been; haven't you found it so?"

"No, I can't say I have," was the reply; "I dare say it was warm travelling: I'm afraid, in that case, Dr. Mildman will not have a very pleasant journey—he's gone to town to-day."

"Ah, so that short, stout young gentleman (the first two adjectives he pronounced very slowly and distinctly) told me."

"Mr. Coleman," insinuated Mrs. Mildman.

"Pleasant that," whispered Coleman to me.

"Take care," replied I, "he will hear you."

"I'm afraid," continued Oaklands, "the old gentleman will be quite knocked up. I wonder he does not make two days' journey of it."

"Dr. Mildman is not so *very* old," observed Mrs. Mildman, in rather an annoyed tone of voice.

"I really beg pardon, I scarcely know why I said it," replied Oaklands, "only I somehow fancied all tutors were between sixty and seventy—very absurd of me. My father sent all kind of civil messages to the o— —to Dr. Mildman, only it is so much trouble to remember that sort of thing."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the announcement of dinner. Oaklands (from whom I could not withdraw my eyes, so unlike anything I had ever met with before was he) was evidently preparing to hand Mrs. Mildman down to dinner, as soon as he could summon sufficient energy to move, but perceiving Cumberland approach her for that purpose, he appeared to recollect himself, smiled slightly, as if at what he had been about to do, and taking me by the arm, said—

"Come, Master Curlylocks, you shall be my lady, and a very pretty girl you would make, too, if you were properly be-muslined;" adding, as we went down stairs together, "You and I shall be great friends, I'm sure; I like your face particularly. What a lot of stairs there are in this house! they'll tire me to death."

When we returned to the pupils' room after dinner, Lawless found, lying on the table, the note Dr. Mildman had written in such a mysterious manner before he left home in the morning, and proceeded to open it forthwith. Scarcely had he glanced his eye over it, when he was seized with so violent a fit of laughter, that I expected every moment to see him fall out of his chair. As soon as he had in some measure recovered the power of speaking, he exclaimed—

"Here, listen to this! and tell me if it is not the very best thing you ever heard in your lives."

He then read as follows:—

"It is not without much pain that I bring myself to write this note; but I feel that I should not be doing my duty towards your excellent father, if I were to allow such extreme misconduct on the part of his son to pass unreproved. I know not towards what scene of vulgar dissipation you might be directing your steps, but the simple fact (to which I was myself witness) of your leaving my house *in the low disguise of a carter's smock frock*, affords in itself sufficient proof that your associates must belong to a class of persons utterly unfitted for the companionship of a gentleman. Let me hope this hint may be enough, and that conduct so thoroughly disgraceful in one brought up as you have been, may not occur again. I presume I need scarcely say that, in the event of your disregarding my wishes upon this point, the only course left open to me would be to expel you, a measure to which it would deeply grieve me to be obliged to resort."

His voice was here drowned by a chorus of laughter from all present who were aware of the true state of the case, which lasted without interruption for several minutes. At length, Lawless observed—

"I'll tell you what, it will be a death-blow to Smithson; a Macintosh made by him to be taken for a smock frock! he'll never recover it."

"Mildman might well look like a thunder-cloud," said Coleman, "if that was the notion he had got in his head; what a jolly lark, to be sure!"

"How do you mean to undeceive him?" inquired Cumberland.

"Oh, trust me for finding a way to do that," replied Lawless; "'the low disguise of a carter's smock frock,' indeed! What fun it would be if he were to meet my governor in town to-day, and tell him of my evil courses! why, the old boy would go into fits! I wonder what he means by his 'scenes of vulgar dissipation?' I dare say he fancies me playing all-fours with a beery coalheaver, and kissing his sooty-faced wife; or drinking alternate goes of gin and water with a dustman for the purpose of insinuating myself into the affections of Miss Cinderella Smut, his interesting sister. By Jove! it's as good as a play!"

More laughter followed Lawless's illustration of Dr. Mildman's note. The subject was discussed for some time, and a plan arranged

for enlightening the Doctor as to the true character of the mysterious garment.

At length there was a pause, when I heard Coleman whisper to Lawless—

"Thomas was pretty right in saying that new fellow knows how to make himself comfortable, at all events."

"He's a precious deal too free and easy to please me," muttered Lawless, in an undertone; "I shall take the liberty of seeing whether his self-possession cannot be disturbed a little. I have no notion of such airs. Here, Mullins!"

And laying hold of Mullins by the arm, he pulled him into a chair by his side, and proceeded to give him some instructions in a whisper. The subject of their remarks, Harry Oaklands, who had, on re-entering the room, taken possession of the three chairs near the window, was still reclining, book in hand, in the same indolent position, apparently enjoying the beauty of the autumnal sunset, without concerning himself in the slightest degree about anything which might be going on inside the room.

Lawless, whose proceedings I was watching with an anxious eye, having evidently succeeded, by a judicious mixture of bullying and cajollery, in persuading Mullins to assist him in whatever he was about to attempt, now drew a chair to the other side of the window, and seated himself exactly opposite to Oaklands.

"How tired riding makes a fellow! I declare I'm regularly baked, used completely up," he observed, and then continued, glancing at Oaklands, "Not such a bad idea, that. Mullins, give us a chair; I don't see why elevating the extremities should not pay in my case, as well as in other people's."

He then placed his legs across the chair which Mullins brought him, and folding his arms so as exactly to imitate the attitude of his opposite neighbour, sat for some minutes gazing out of the window with a countenance of mock solemnity. Finding this did not produce any effect on Oaklands, who having slightly raised his eyes when Lawless first seated himself, immediately cast them upon the book again, Lawless stretched himself, yawned, and once more addressed Mullins.

"Shocking bad sunset as ever I saw—it's no go staring at that. I must have a book—give me the Byron."

To this Mullins replied, "that he believed Mr. Oaklands was reading it."

"Indeed! the book belongs to you, does it not?"

Mullins replied in the affirmative.

"Have you any objection to lend it to me?"

Mullins would be most happy to do so.

"Then ask the gentleman to give it to you—you have a right to do what you please with your own property, I imagine?"

It was very evident that this suggestion was not exactly agreeable to Mullins; and although his habitual fear of Lawless was so strong as completely to overpower any dread of what might be the possible consequences of his act, it was not without much hesitation that he approached Oaklands, and asked him for the book, "as he wished to lend it to Lawless."

On hearing this, Oaklands leisurely turned to the fly-leaf, and having apparently satisfied himself, by the perusal of the name written thereon, that it really belonged to Mullins, handed it to him without a word. I fancied, however, from the stern expression of his mouth, and a slight contraction of the brow, that he was not as insensible to their impertinence as he wished to appear.

Lawless, who had been sitting during this little scene with his eyes closed, as if asleep, now roused himself, and saying, "Oh, you have got it at last, have you?" began turning over the pages, reading aloud a line or two here and there, while he kept up a running commentary on the text as he did so—

"Hum! ha! now let's see, here we are—the 'G-I-A-O-U-R,'—that's a nice word to talk about. What does G-I-A-O-U-R spell, Mullins? You don't know? what an ass you are, to be sure!—

'Fair clime, whose every season smiles
Benignant o'er those blessed isles'—

blessed isles, indeed, what stuff!—

''Tis Greece, but living Greece no more;

that would do for a motto for the barbers to stick on their pots of bear's grease!—

'Clime of the unforgotten brave,'

unforgotten! yes, I should think so; how the deuce should they be forgotten, when one is bored with them morning, noon, and night, for everlasting, by old Sam, and all the other pastors and masters in the kingdom? Hang me, if I can read this trash; the only poetry that ever was written worth reading is 'Don Juan.'"

He then flung down the book, adding—

"It's confoundedly cold, I think. Mullins, shut that window."

This order involved more difficulties in its execution than might at first be imagined. Oaklands, after giving up the book, had slightly altered his position, by drawing nearer the window, and leaning his elbow on the sill, so that it was impossible to shut it without obliging him to move. Mullins saw this, and seemed for a moment inclined not to obey, but a look and a threatening gesture from Lawless again decided him; and with slow unwilling steps he approached the window, and laid his hand on it, for the purpose of shutting it. As he did so, Oaklands raised his head, and regarded him for a moment with a glance like lightning, his large eyes glaring in the twilight like those of some wild animal, while the red flush of anger rose to his brow, and we all expected to see him strike Mullins to the ground. Conquering himself, however, by a powerful effort of self-control, he folded his arms, and turning from the window, suffered Mullins to close it without interruption. Still I could perceive, from the distended nostril and quivering lip, that his forbearance was almost exhausted.

"Ah, that's an improvement," said Lawless; "I was getting uncommonly chilly. By the way, what an interesting virtue patience is; it is a curious fact in Natural History, that some of the lower animals share it with us; for instance, there's nothing so patient as a jack-ass——"

"Except a pig," put in Mullins; "they're uncommon——"

"Obstinate," suggested Coleman.

"Oh, ah! it's obstinate I mean," replied Mullins. "Well, you know donkeys are obstinate, like a pig, that's what I meant."

"Don't be a fool," said Lawless. "Deuce take these chairs, I cannot make myself comfortable anyhow—the fact is, I must have three, that's the proper number—give me another, Mullins."

"I can't find one," was the answer; "they are all in use."

"Can't find one! nonsense," said Lawless; "here, take one of these; the gentleman is asleep, and won't object, I dare say."

When Mullins was shutting the window, his head had been so turned as to prevent his observing the symptoms of anger in Oaklands, which had convinced me that he would not bear trifling with much longer. Presuming, therefore, from the success of his former attacks, that the new pupil was a person who might be insulted with impunity, and actuated by that general desire of retaliation, which is the certain effect bullying produces upon a mean disposition, Mullins proceeded, *con amore*, to fulfil Lawless's injunction. With a sudden snatch, he withdrew the centre chair, on which Oaklands'

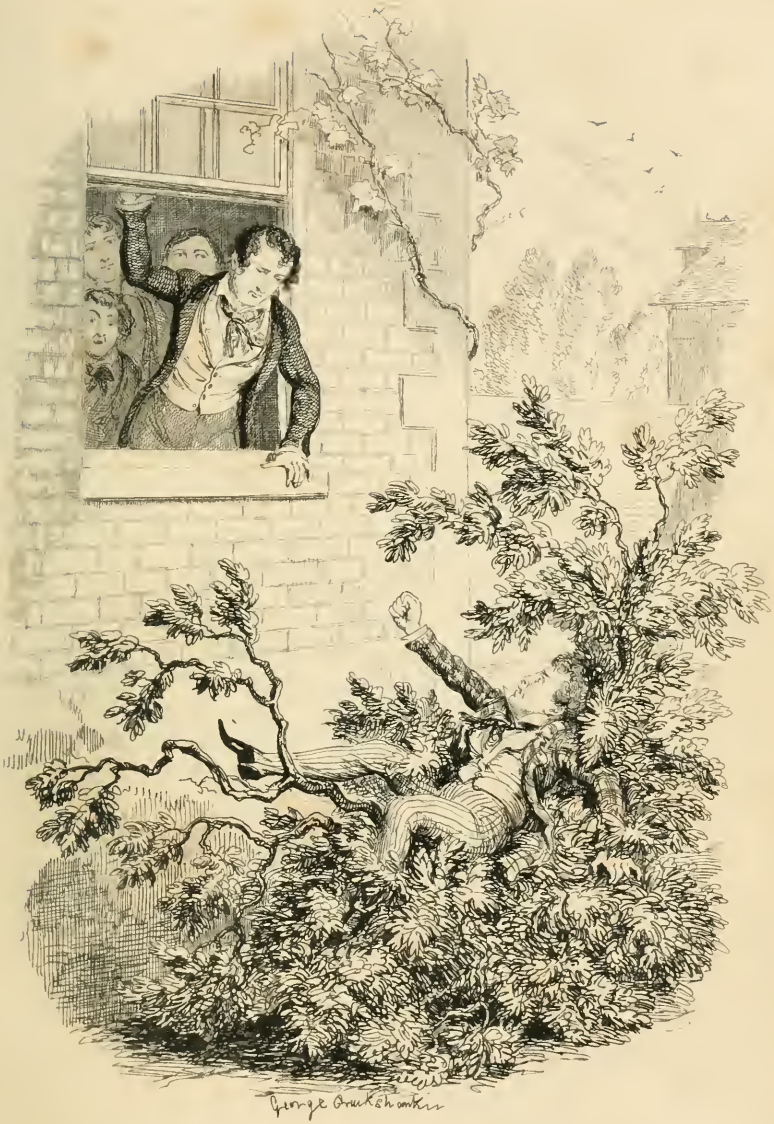
legs mainly rested, so violently as nearly to throw them to the ground, a catastrophe which was finally consummated by Lawless giving the other chair a push with his foot, so that it was only by great exertion and quickness that Oaklands was able to save himself from falling.

This was the climax; forbearance merely human could endure no longer: Lawless had obtained his object of disturbing Harry Oaklands' self-possession, and was now to learn the consequences of his success. With a bound like that of an infuriated tiger, Oaklands leaped upon his feet, and dashing Mullins into a corner with such force that he remained lying exactly where he fell, he sprang upon Lawless, seized him by the collar of his coat, and after a short but severe struggle, dragged him to the window, which was about eight feet from the ground, threw it open, and taking him in his arms with as much ease as if he had been a child, flung him out. He then returned to the corner in which, paralyzed with fear, Mullins was still crouching, drew him to the spot from whence he had removed the chair, placed him there upon his hands and knees, and saying, in a stern voice, "If you dare to move till I tell you, I'll throw you out of the window too," quietly resumed his former position, with his legs resting upon Mullins' back, instead of a chair.

As soon as Coleman and I had in some degree recovered from our surprise and consternation (for the anger of Oaklands once roused was a fearful thing to behold), we ran to the other window, just in time to see Lawless, who had alighted among some stunted shrubs, turn round and shake his fist at Oaklands (who merely smiled), ere he regained his feet, and rang the bell in order to gain admittance. A minute afterwards, we heard him stride up stairs, enter his bed-room, and close the door with a most sonorous bang. Affairs remained in this position nearly a quarter of an hour, no one feeling inclined to be the first to speak. At length the silence was broken by Oaklands, who, addressing himself to Cumberland, said—

"I am afraid this absurd piece of business has completely marred the harmony of the evening. Get up, Mr. Mullins," he continued, removing his legs and assisting him to rise; "I hope I did not hurt you just now."

In reply to this, Mullins grumbled out something intended as a negative, and shambling across the room, placed himself in a corner, as far as possible from Oaklands, where he sat rubbing his knees,


George Cruikshank

the very image of sulkiness and terror. Cumberland, who appeared during the whole course of the affair absorbed in a book, though, in fact, not a single word or look had escaped him, now came forward and apologized, in a quiet gentlemanly manner (which, when he was inclined, no one could assume with greater success), for Lawless's impertinence, which had only, he said, met with its proper reward.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Cumberland, if I cannot agree with you," replied Oaklands; "since I have had time to cool a little, I see the matter in quite a different light. Mr. Lawless was perfectly right; the carelessness of my manner must naturally have seemed as if I were purposely giving myself airs, but I can assure you such was not the case."

He paused for a moment, and then continued, with a half-embarrassed smile—

"The fact is, I am afraid that I have been spoiled at home: my mother died when I was a little child, and my dear father, having nobody else to care about, thought, I believe, that there was no one in the world equal to me, and that nothing was too good for me. Of course, all our servants and people have taken their tone from him, so that I have never had any one to say to me, 'Nay,' and am therefore not at all used to the sort of thing. I hope I do not often lose my temper as I have done this evening; but really Mr. Lawless appears quite an adept in the art of ingeniously tormenting."

"I am afraid you must have found so much exertion very fatiguing," observed Coleman, politely.

"A fair hit, Mr. Coleman," replied Oaklands, laughing. "No! those are not the things that tire me, somehow; but in general I am very easily knocked up—I am indeed—most things are so much trouble, and I hate trouble; I suppose it is that I am not strong."

"Wretchedly weak, I should say," rejoined Coleman; "it struck me that you were so just now, when you chucked Lawless out of the window like a cat."

"Be quiet, Freddy," said Cumberland, reprovingly.

"Nay, don't stop him," said Oaklands; "I delight in a joke beyond measure, when I have not the trouble of making it myself. But about this Mr. Lawless, I am exceedingly sorry that I handled him so roughly: would you mind going to tell him so, Mr. Cumberland, and explaining that I did not mean anything offensive by my manner."

"Exactly, I'll make him understand the whole affair, and bring

him down with me in five minutes," said Cumberland, leaving the room as he spoke.

"What makes Cumberland so good-natured and amiable to-night?" whispered I to Coleman.

"Can't you tell?" was the reply. "Don't you see that Oaklands is a regular top-sawyer, a fish worth catching; and that by doing this, Cumberland places him under an obligation at first starting? Not a bad move to begin with, eh? Besides, if a regular quarrel between Lawless and Oaklands were to ensue, Cumberland would have to take one side or the other; and it would not exactly suit him to break with Lawless, he knows too much about him; besides (added he, sinking his voice), he owes him money, more than I should like to owe anybody a precious deal, I can tell you. Now, do you *twig?*"

"Yes," said I, "I comprehend the matter more clearly, if that is what you mean by '*twigging;*' but how shocking it all is! why, Cumberland is quite a swindler—gambling, borrowing money he can't pay, and——"

"Hush!" interrupted Coleman, "here they come."

Coleman was not mistaken: Cumberland had been successful in his embassy, and now entered the room, accompanied by Lawless, who looked rather crest-fallen, somewhat angry, and particularly embarrassed and uncomfortable, which, as Coleman whispered to me, was not to be wondered at, considering how thoroughly he had been *put out* just before. Oaklands, however, appeared to see nothing of all this; but, rising from his seat as they entered, he approached Lawless, saying—

"This has been a foolish piece of business, Mr. Lawless; I freely own that I am thoroughly ashamed of the part I have taken in it, and I can only apologize for the intemperate manner in which I behaved."

The frank courtesy with which he said this was so irresistible, that Lawless was completely overcome, and, probably for the first time in his life, felt himself thoroughly in the wrong. Seizing Oaklands' hand, therefore, and shaking it heartily, he replied—

"I tell you what it is, Oaklands (we don't Mr. each other here), you are a right good fellow—a regular brick, and no mistake; and, as to your shoving me out of the window, you served me quite right for my abominable impertinence. I only wonder you did not do it ten minutes sooner, that's all; but you really ought to be careful what you do with those arms of yours; I was like a child in your grasp; you are as strong as a steam engine."

"I can assure you I am not," replied Oaklands; "they never let me do anything at home, for fear I should knock myself up."

"You are more likely to knock other people down, I should say," rejoined Lawless; "and, by the way, that reminds me—Mullins! come here, stupid, and beg Mr. Oaklands' pardon, and thank him for knocking you down."

A sulky, half-muttered "sha'nt," was the only reply

"Nay, I don't want anything of that kind; I don't indeed, Lawless, pray leave him alone," cried Oaklands eagerly.

But Lawless was not so easily quieted, and Oaklands, unwilling to risk the harmony so newly established between them, did not choose to interfere further; so Mullins was dragged across the room by the ears, and was forced by Lawless, who stood over him with the poker (which, he informed him, he was destined to eat red hot if he became restive), to make Oaklands a long and formal apology, with a short form of thanksgiving appended, for the kindness and condescension he had evinced, in knocking him down so nicely, of which oration he delivered himself with a very bad grace indeed.

"And all went merry as a marriage-bell," until we were summoned to the drawing-room, where we were regaled with weak tea, thin bread and butter, and small conversation till ten o'clock, when Mrs. Mildman proceeded to read prayers, which, being a duty she was little accustomed to, and which consequently rendered her extremely nervous, she did not accomplish without having twice called King William, George, and suppressed our gracious Queen Adelaide altogether.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOARD OF GREEN CLOTH.

What have we here—a man or a fish?—*The Tempest.*

The devil he baited a trap,
With billiard balls and a cue;
And he chose as marker,
An imp much darker
Than all the rest in hue.
And he put on his Sunday clothes,
And he played with saint and with sinner,
For he'd found out a way
To make the thing pay,
And when losing, HE *still was the winner!*—*Old Legend.*

THE moment Dr. Mildman arrived at home the next day, Lawless watched him into his study, and, as soon as he was safely lodged therein, proceeded, by the aid of sundry nails and loops previously placed there for the purpose, to hang his Macintosh right across the passage, so that no one could leave the study without running against it. He then ambushed himself near the open door of the pupils' room, where, unseen himself, he could observe the effect of his arrangements. Coleman and I, also taking a lively interest in the event, ensconced ourselves in a favourable position for seeing and hearing. After waiting till our small stock of patience was nearly exhausted, we were rewarded by hearing the study-door slowly open, followed by the tread of a well-known footstep in the passage. The next sound that reached our ears was a quick shuffling of feet upon the oil-cloth, as if the person advancing had "shyed" at some unexpected object; then came the muttered exclamation, "Bless my heart, what's this?" And immediately afterwards Dr. Mildman's face, wearing an expression of the most thorough perplexity and bewilderment, appeared cautiously peeping from behind the Macintosh. Having apparently satisfied himself that no enemy was concealed there, and he had nothing further to fear, but that the whole plot was centered as it were in the mysterious garment before him, he set himself seriously to work to examine it. First he pulled out his eye-glass, and stepping back a pace or two, took a general survey of the whole; he then ap-

proached it again, and taking hold of it in different places with his hand, examined it in detail so closely that it seemed as if he were trying to count the number of threads. Being apparently unwilling in so difficult an investigation to trust to the evidence of any one sense, he replaced his eye-glass in his waistcoat-pocket, and began rubbing a portion of the skirt between his hands; the sense of touch failing, however, to throw any new light upon the subject, as a sort of forlorn hope he applied his nose to it. The result of this was an indescribable exclamation, expressive of intense disgust, followed immediately by a violent sneeze; then came a long pause, as though he were considering of what possible use such a garment could be. At length a ray of light seemed to break in upon the darkness, and once more laying hands on the Macintosh, he proceeded, after unhooking it from the nails on which it hung, slowly and deliberately to put it on, with the back part foremost, somewhat after the fashion of a child's pinafore. Having at length accomplished this difficult operation, he walked, or rather shuffled, (for his petticoats interfered greatly with the free use of his limbs,) up and down the hall, with a grave, not to say solemn expression of countenance. Appearing perfectly satisfied after one or two turns that he had at last solved the enigma, he divested himself of the perplexing garment, hung it on a peg appropriated to great-coats, and approached the door of the pupils' room.

By the time he entered, Lawless was seated at his desk studying Herodotus, while Coleman and I were deeply immersed in our respective Euclids.

After shaking hands with Oaklands, and addressing some good-natured remarks to each of us in turn, he went up to Lawless, and, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, said, with a half smile—

"I am afraid I have made rather an absurd mistake about that strange garment of yours, Lawless; I suppose it is some new kind of great-coat, is it not?"

"Yes, sir, it is a sort of waterproof cloth, made with Indian rubber."

"Indian rubber is it? Well, I fancied so; it has not the nicest smell in the world. I certainly thought it was a smock-frock, though, when I saw you go out in it. Is not it rather awkward to walk in? I found it so when I tried it on just now, and buttoning behind does not seem to me at all a good plan."

"No, sir, but it is meant to button in front; perhaps you put it on the back part foremost."

"Hem!" said Dr. Mildman, trying to look as if he thought such a thing impossible, and failing—"it is a very singular article of dress altogether, but I am glad it was not a smock-frock you went out in. I hope, (continued he, turning to Oaklands, with an evident wish to change the conversation) I hope they took good care of you when you arrived last night?"

This was turning the tables with a vengeance! Lawless became suddenly immersed in Herodotus again.

"Oh! the greatest," was the reply; "I had so much attention paid me, that I was almost *upset* by it. I was not quite overcome, though," he continued, with a sly glance towards Lawless, "and Mrs. Mildman gave us some very nice tea, which soon restored me."

"Well, I'm glad they managed to make you comfortable among them," observed Dr. Mildman, turning over his papers and books, preparatory to beginning the morning's study.

"Hadn't you better ask him when he expects the sofa will be down?" suggested Coleman to Oaklands in a whisper.

"No, you jackanapes," was the reply, "and don't you make me laugh when that old gentleman is in the room, for there's nothing more fatiguing than the attempt to smother a laugh."

Coleman's only answer to this, if answer it could be called, was a grimace, which had the desired effect of throwing Oaklands into a fit of laughter, which he found it very hard labour indeed to stifle; nor had his countenance quite recovered from the effects of his exertions, when he was summoned to the Doctor's table to undergo an examination similar to that which had appeared so formidable to me a few days before; and thus terminated the notable adventure of the carter's frock, though I observed that after a week or two had elapsed, the Macintosh was handed over to Thomas, and Smithson was called upon to tax his inventive powers to furnish Lawless with a less questionably shaped garment of the same material.

A few days after this, as I was walking with Coleman, he suddenly exclaimed—

"Well, of all the antediluvian affairs I ever beheld, the old fellow now coming towards us is the queerest: he looks like a fossil edition of Methuselah, dug up, and modernized some hundred years ago at the very least. Holloa! he's going mad I believe; I hope he does not bite."

The subject of these somewhat uncomplimentary remarks, was a little old gentleman in a broad-brimmed white hat, turned up with

green, and a black cloth spencer, (an article much like a boy's jacket exaggerated,) from beneath which protruded the very broad tails of a blue coat, with rather more than their proper complement of bright brass buttons, while drab gaiters and shorts completed the costume.

The moment, however, I beheld the countenance of the individual in question, I recognized the never-to-be-mistaken mole at the tip of the nose of my late coach companion to London. The recognition seemed mutual, for no sooner did he perceive me than he stopped short, and pointed straight at me with a stout silver-mounted bamboo which he held in his hand, uttering a sonorous "Umph!" as he did so; to which somewhat unusual mode of salutation may be attributed Coleman's doubts as to his sanity.

"Who'd ever have thought of meeting you at Helmstone, I should like to know?" exclaimed he in a tone of astonishment.

"I was going to say the same thing to you, sir," replied I: "I came down here the very day on which we travelled together."

"Umph! I came the next: well, and what are you doing now you are here? Schoolmaster lives here, I suppose—Tutor, you call him, though, don't you?"

I informed him of my Tutor's name and residence, when he continued—

"Umph! I know him; very good man, too good to be plagued by a set of tiresome boys—men, though, you call yourselves, don't you? Umph! Is he a man too?" he inquired, pointing to Coleman.

"I've been a man these seventeen years, sir," replied Coleman.

"Umph, a man seventeen years ago! a baby, more likely: what does he mean? what does he mean?"

I explained that he probably intended a pun upon his name, which was Cole*man*.

"A pun, Umph? he makes puns, does he? funny boy, funny boy, I dare say. How does the Doctor like that, though? Make puns to him, he'd *pun*ish you, Umph? Stupid things puns—made one myself then, though—just like me. Well, give the Doctor my compliments—Mr. Frampton's—I live at No. 10 Castle-street,—he knows me, and ask him to let you come and dine with me next week; bring funny boy too, if he likes to come;" and away he posted, muttering "Umph! plaguing myself about a pack of boys, when I might be quiet—just like me!"

We did not fail to deliver Mr. Frampton's message to Dr. Mildman on our return home, who willingly gave us the required

permission, saying that he knew but little of the old gentleman personally, though he had resided for several years at Helmstone, but that he was universally respected, in spite of his eccentricities, and was reported to have spent great part of his life abroad. The next time I met my new friend, he repeated his invitation to Coleman and myself, and, on the day appointed, gave us an excellent dinner, with quite as much wine as we knew what to do with; amused and interested us with sundry well-told anecdotes of adventures he had met with during his residence in foreign lands, and dismissed us at nine o'clock with a tip of a guinea each, and an injunction to come and see him again whenever we pleased.

For many succeeding weeks nothing of any particular moment occurred to interrupt the even tenour of the new course of life I had entered upon. The liking which Oaklands seemed to have taken to me at first sight soon ripened into a warm friendship, which continued daily to increase on my part, as the many noble and lovable qualities of his disposition appeared, one by one, from behind the veil of indolence which, till one knew him well, effectually concealed them. Coleman, though too volatile to make a real friend of, was a very agreeable companion, and, if it were ever possible to get him to be serious for a minute, showed that beneath the frivolity of his manner lay a basis of clear good sense and right feeling, which only required calling forth to render him a much higher character than he appeared at present. For the rest, I was alternately bullied and patronized by Lawless, (though he never ventured on the former line of conduct when Oaklands was present,) while Cumberland, outwardly professing great regard for me, never let slip an opportunity of showing me an ill-natured turn, when he could contrive to do so without committing himself openly.

A more intimate acquaintance with Mullins only served to place beyond a doubt the fact of his being a most unmitigated, and not over-amiable, fool. The word is a strong one, but I fear that, if I were to use a milder term, it would be at the expense of truth.

For my Tutor I soon began to conceive the warmest feelings of regard and esteem; in fact, it was impossible to know him well, and not to love him. Simple as a child in everything relating to worldly matters, he united the deepest learning to the most elevated piety, while the thoroughly practical character of his religion, carried, as it was, into all the minor details of every-day life, imparted a gentleness and benignity to his manner which seemed to elevate him above the level of ordinary mortals. If he had a fault (I suppose,

merely for the sake of proving him human, I must allow him one,) it was a want of moral courage, which made it so disagreeable to him to find fault with any of us, that he would now and then allow evils to exist, which a little more firmness and decision might have prevented; but, had it not been for this, he would have been quite perfect, and perfection is a thing not to be met with in this life.

Cumberland, after the eventful evening on which he acted as peacemaker between Lawless and Oaklands, had persevered steadily in his endeavour to ingratiate himself with the latter; and, by taking advantage of his weak point, his indolence and dislike of trouble, had, at length, succeeded in making Oaklands believe him essential to his comfort. Thus, though there was not the smallest sympathy between them, a sort of alliance was established, which gave Cumberland exactly the opportunities he required for putting into execution certain schemes which he had formed. Of what these schemes consisted, and how far they succeeded, will appear in the course of this veracious history.

The winter months, after favouring us with rather more than our due allowance of frost and snow, had at length passed away, and March, having come in like a lion, appeared determined, after the fashion of Bottom the weaver, "to roar that it would do any man's heart good to hear him," and to kick up a thorough dust ere he would condescend to go out like a lamb, albeit, in the latter state, he might have made a shilling per pound of himself at any market, had he felt suicidally inclined.

"This will never do," said Oaklands to me, as, for the third time, we were obliged to turn round and cover our eyes, to avoid being blinded by the cloud of dust which a strong east wind was driving directly in our faces; "there is nothing in the world tires one like walking against a high wind. A quarter to three," added he, taking out his watch. "I have an appointment at three o'clock. Will you walk with me? I must turn up here."

I assented; and, turning a corner, we proceeded up a narrow street, where the houses, in a great measure, protected us from the wind. After walking some little distance in silence, Oaklands again addressed me—

"Frank, did you ever play at billiards?"

I replied in the negative.

"It's a game I've rather a liking for," continued he, "we have a table at Heathfield, and my father and I often played when the weather was too bad to get out: I used to beat the old gentleman

easily though at last, till I found out one day he did not half like it, so then I was obliged to make shocking mistakes, every now and then, to give him a chance of winning; anybody else would have found me out in a minute, for I am the worst hand in the world at playing the hypocrite, but my father is the most unsuspicious creature breathing. Oh! he is such a dear old man. You must come and stay with us, Frank, and learn to know him and love him—he'd delight in you—you are just the sort of fellow he likes."

"There's nothing I should like better," answered I, "if I can get leave from head-quarters; but why did you want to know if I played at billiards?"

"Oh, I have been playing a good deal lately with Cumberland, who seems very fond of the game, and I'm going to meet him at the rooms in F—— Street to-day; so I thought, if you knew anything of the game, you might like to come with me."

"Cumberland is a first-rate player, isn't he?" asked I.

"No, I do not think so: we play very evenly, I should say; but we are to have a regular match to-day, to decide which is the best player."

"Do you play for money?"

"Just a trifle to give an interest to the game, nothing more," replied Oaklands; "our match to-day is for a five-pound note."

I must confess that I could not help feeling extremely uneasy at the information Oaklands had just given me. The recollection of what Coleman had said concerning some gaming affair in which Cumberland was supposed to have behaved dishonourably, combined with a sort of general notion, which seemed to prevail, that he was not exactly a safe person to have much to do with, might in some degree account for this; still I always felt a kind of instinctive dislike and mistrust of Cumberland, which led me to avoid him as much as possible on my own account. In the present instance, when the danger seemed to threaten my friend, this feeling assumed a vague character of fear; "and yet," reasoned I with myself, "what is there to dread? Oaklands has plenty of money at his command; besides, he says they play pretty evenly, so that he must win nearly as often as Cumberland; then, he is older than I am, and of course must be better able to judge what is right or wrong for him to do." However, remembering the old adage, that "lookers-on see most of the game," I determined, for once, to accompany him; I therefore told him that, though I could not play myself, it would be an amusement to me to watch them, and that,

if he had no objection, I would go with him, to which proposition he willingly agreed. As we turned into F—— Street, we were joined by Cumberland, who, as I fancied, did not seem best pleased at seeing me, nor did the scowl which passed across his brow, on hearing I was to accompany them, tend to lessen this impression. He did not, however, attempt to make any opposition to the plan, merely remarking that, as I did not play myself, he thought I should find it rather dull. After proceeding about half way down the street, Cumberland stopped in front of a small cigar-shop, and, turning towards a private door, on which was a brass plate with the word "Billiards" engraved on it, knocked, and was admitted. Leading the way up a dark, narrow staircase, he opened a green baize door at the top, and ushered us into a tolerably large room, lighted by a sky-light, immediately under which stood the billiard-table. On one side was placed a rack, containing a formidable arrangement of cues, maces, &c., while at the farther end two small dials, with a brass hand in the centre for the purpose of marking the scores of the different players, were fixed against the wall. As we entered, two persons who were apparently performing certain intricate manœuvres with the balls by way of practice, immediately left off playing, and came towards us. One of these, a little man, with small keen grey eyes, and a quick restless manner, which involuntarily reminded one of a hungry rat, rejoiced in the name of "Slipsey," and proved to be the billiard-marker; his companion was a tall stout personage, with a very red face, rather handsome features, large white teeth, and a profusion of bushy whiskers, moustaches, and imperial of a dark-brown colour. His dress consisted of a blue military frock coat, which he wore open, to display a crimson plush waistcoat and thick gold watch-chain, while his costume was completed by a pair of black and white plaid trowsers, made in the extreme of the fashion, with a broad stripe down the outside of the leg. This personage swaggered up to Cumberland, and with a manner composed of impertinent familiarity and awkwardness, addressed him as follows:—

"How d'ye do, Mr. Cumberland? hope I see you well, sir. Terrible bad day, gentlemen, don't you think? dusty enough to pepper the devil, as we used to say in Spain, hey? Going to have a touch at the rolley-polleys, I suppose."

"We shall be disturbing you, Captain Spicer," said Cumberland, who, I thought, had tact enough to perceive that his friend's free and easy manner was the reverse of acceptable to Oaklands.

"Not at all, not at all," was the reply; "it was so terrible unpleasant out of doors, that, as I happened to be going by, I thought I'd look in, to see if there was anything up; and as the table was lying idle, I got knocking the balls about with little Slipsey here, just to keep one's hand in, you know."

"Well, then, we had better begin at once," said Cumberland, to which Oaklands assented rather coldly.

As he was pulling off his great-coat, he whispered to me, "If that man stays here long, I shall never be able to stand it: his familiarity is unbearable; there is nothing tires me so much as being obliged to be civil to those kind of people."

"How is it to be?" said Cumberland, "whoever wins four games out of seven is the conqueror, wasn't that it?"

"Yes, I believe so," was Oaklands' reply.

"A very sporting match, 'pon my life," observed the Captain; "are the stakes high?"

"Oh no! a mere nothing: five, or ten pounds, did we say?" inquired Cumberland.

"Just as you like," replied Oaklands, carelessly.

"Ten pounds, by all means, I should say; five pounds is so shocking small, don't you think? not worth playing for?" said the Captain.

"Ten let it be then," said Cumberland; and after a few preliminaries they began playing.

I did not understand the game sufficiently to be able to give a detailed account of the various chances of the match, nor would it probably greatly interest the reader were I to do so. Suffice it, then, to state, that, as far as I could judge, Oaklands, disgusted by the vulgar impertinence of the Captain, (if Captain he was,) thought the whole thing a bore, and played carelessly. The consequence was, that Cumberland won the first two games. This put Oaklands upon his mettle, and he won the third and fourth; the fifth was hardly contested, Oaklands evidently playing as well as he was able, Cumberland also taking pains; but it struck me as singular that, in each game, *his* play seemed to depend upon that of his adversary. When Oaklands first began, Cumberland certainly beat him, but not by many; and, as he became interested, and his play improved, so in the same ratio did Cumberland's keep pace with it. Of course, there might be nothing in this; the same causes that affected the one might influence the other; but the idea having once occurred to me, I determined to watch the proceedings still

more closely, in order, if possible, to make up my mind on the point. After a very close contest Oaklands also won the fifth game; in the sixth he missed a difficult stroke, after which he played carelessly, apparently intending to reserve his strength for the final struggle, so that Cumberland won it easily. Each had now won three games, and on the event of the seventh depended the match. Again did Oaklands, who was evidently deeply interested, use his utmost skill, and his play, which certainly was very good, called forth frequent eulogiums from the Captain, who offered to bet unheard-of sums on the certainty of his winning, (which, as there was no one in the room at all likely to accept his offer, was a very safe and innocent amusement,) and again, *pari passu*, did Cumberland's skill keep pace with his. After playing neck and neck, till nearly the end of the game, Cumberland gained a slight advantage, which produced the following state of affairs:—It was Oakland's turn to play, and the balls were placed in such a position, that by a brilliant stroke he might win the game, but it required great skill to do so. If he failed, the chances were so much in Cumberland's favour as to render his success almost a certainty. It was an anxious moment: for my own part, I felt as if I scarcely dared breathe, and could distinctly hear the throbbing of my own heart, while the Captain, after having most liberally offered to bet five hundred pounds to five pence that he did it, remained silent and motionless as a statue, watching the proceedings, with his eye-glass screwed after some mysterious fashion into the corner of his eye. And now, carefully and deliberately, Oaklands pointed his cue,—his elbow was drawn back for the stroke,—for the last time his eye appeared to measure and calculate the precise spot he must strike to produce the desired effect,—when suddenly, and at the exact moment in which the cue struck the ball, a sonorous sneeze from the rat-like billiard-marker resounded through the room; as a necessary consequence, Oaklands gave a slight start and missed his stroke. The confusion that ensued can "better be imagined than described," as the newspapers always say about the return from Epsom. With an exclamation of anger and disappointment Oaklands turned away from the table, while the Captain began storming at Slipsey, whom he declared himself ready to kick till all was blue, for the trifling remuneration of half a farthing. The marker himself apologized, with great contrition, for his delinquency, which he declared was quite involuntary, at the same time asserting that, to the best of his belief, the gentleman had made his stroke *before* he sneezed; this Oaklands denied, and

appealed to Cumberland for his opinion. After trying in various ways to avoid giving a direct answer, and appealing, in his turn, to Captain Spicer, (who was so intensely positive that the sneeze had preceded the stroke, that he was willing to back his opinion to any amount,) Cumberland very unwillingly owned that, if he was forced to say what he thought, he believed Oaklands had made his stroke before the sneeze caused him to start, but that it was a near thing, and he might very possibly be mistaken. This was quite enough for Oaklands, who declared that he was perfectly satisfied, and begged Cumberland to play, which, with some apparent reluctance, he did, and, as was almost a matter of certainty, proved the conqueror.

"'Pon my life, in all my experience, I never knew a gentleman lose a match in such a tremendously unfortunate way," observed the Captain. "I am certain that if you had not been flurried, Mr. Oaklands, sir, you could have done the trick as clean as a whistle. Allow me to place the balls as they were then—I know how they stood to a nicety—there, that's it to a demi-semi fraction; oblige me, sir, just as a personal favour, by trying the stroke once more."

Thus invoked, Oaklands approached the table, and, without a moment's deliberation, struck the ball, and succeeded in doing with perfect ease the very thing which a minute before would have won him ten pounds.

"There! I was super certain you could do it; the match was yours, sir, as safe as the bank, if that wretched little abortion there hadn't made that disgusting noise. Play him again, sir; play him again: Mr. Cumberland's a pretty player, a very pretty player; but you're too strong for him, Mr. Oaklands; it's my firm conviction you're too strong for him."

"What do you say to giving me my revenge, Cumberland?" asked Oaklands.

"Oh! *I* can have no possible objection," replied Cumberland, with the slightest imaginable assumption of superiority in his tone, which annoyed my ear, and which I felt sure would produce the same effect upon Oaklands. The next game Oaklands won; and they continued to play the rest of the afternoon with various success, and for what appeared to me very high stakes. I calculated that, by the time they left off, Oaklands must have lost more than thirty pounds; and yet, in spite of this, to a superficial observer he appeared to be the better player of the two: he certainly made the most brilliant strokes, but he also made blunders, and failed now

and then; while Cumberland's score mounted up without one's exactly knowing how; he never seemed to be playing particularly well, and yet there was always something easy for him to do; while, when Oaklands had to play, the balls got into such awkward positions that it appeared as if they were leagued against him.

Besides this, many things concurred to strengthen me in my preconceived idea, that Cumberland was accommodating his play to that of Oaklands, whom, I felt certain, he could have beaten easily, if he had been so inclined. If this were really the case, the only conclusion one could come to was, that the whole thing was a regularly arranged plot: the object of which was to win as much as he could of Oaklands' money. The marker's sneeze too occurring so very opportunely for Cumberland's interest; and the presence of the Captain, who, by his eulogiums on Oaklands' skill, had excited him to continue playing, while, by his observations and advice, he had endeavoured (whenever it was possible) to raise the amount of the stakes; all this favoured my view of the case. Still these were but suspicions, for I was utterly without proof: and could I on mere suspicion tell Oaklands that he was a dupe, and Cumberland a knave? No, this would never do; so I determined, as people generally do when they are at their wits' end, and can hit on nothing better, to wait and see what time would bring forth, and act according to circumstances.

Should any of my readers think such penetration unnatural in a boy of my age, brought up in a quiet country parsonage, let them remember, that, though utterly ignorant of the ways of the world, I was what is called a quick, sharp boy; that I had been informed Cumberland was not a person to be trusted, nay, that he was known to have cheated some young man before; and that, moreover, my very unworldliness and ignorance increased my suspicions, inasmuch as it seemed to me, that playing billiards, at a public table, for what I considered large sums of money, was neither more nor less than gambling; and gambling I viewed in the light of a patent twenty-devil-power man-trap, fresh baited, (in the present case with a billiard cue and balls,) by the claws of the evil One himself; consequently, I was prepared to view everything that passed with the greatest mistrust; and, in such a frame of mind, I must have been blind, not to have perceived something of what was going on.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

"Blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please.—*Hamlet.*

There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft.—*Naval Song.*

As we were preparing to take our departure, I observed the Captain exchange glances with Cumberland, who turned to Oaklands, saying—

"Don't wait for me; I have one or two places to call at in my way back, and I shall only make you late;—when you get home, give Thomas a hint to keep back dinner five minutes or so,—old Mildman won't say anything about it, if he fancies it's the servant's fault."

To this Oaklands replied, "that it was rather a shame, but he'd see what he could do for once;" and, with a very distant bow to the Captain, we left the room. As soon as we were in the street, Oaklands accosted me with,

"Well, Frank, what do you think of billiards?"

"Why," replied I, after a moment's thought, "as to the game itself, it's a very pretty game, and when you can play well, I have no doubt a very interesting one; too much so, perhaps."

"Too interesting! why, that's the beauty of it; almost every other game is a bore, and tires one, because one does not get sufficiently interested to forget the trouble of it, what can you mean by too interesting?"

"You won't be angry at what I am going to say, will you?" said I, looking up in his face.

"Angry with you, my dear boy! no fear of that; always say just what you think to me, and if it happens to be disagreeable, why it can't be helped; I would rather hear a disagreeable truth from a friend any day, than have it left for some ill-natured person to bring out, when he wants to annoy me."

"All I meant to say was this," I replied; "it seems to me that

you get so much excited by the game, that you go on playing longer, and for higher stakes, than you intended to do when you began,—surely," continued I, "it cannot be right to lose such sums of money merely for amusement; is it not gambling?"

"I believe you are right, Frank," replied Oaklands, after a short pause, during which he had apparently been revolving the matter in his mind; "when one comes to think seriously about it, it is a most unprofitable way of getting rid of one's money; you will scarcely credit it," continued he, half smiling, "but I declare to you I have been playing almost every day for the last two months."

"So long as that?" interrupted I, aghast.

"There or thereabouts," said Oaklands, laughing at the tone of horror in which I had spoken; "but I was going to say," he continued, "that till this moment, (looking upon it merely as an amusement, something to keep one from going to sleep over a newspaper in that vile reading-room,) I have never taken the trouble to consider whether there was any right or wrong in the matter. I am very much obliged to you for the hint, Frank; I'll think it all over to-night, and see how much I owe Master Cumberland, and I'll tell you to-morrow what conclusion I have come to. I hate to do anything in a hurry—even to think; one must take time to do that well."

We had now reached home, and mindful of his promise, Oaklands begged Thomas to use his interest with the cook, for the purpose of postponing dinner for a few minutes, in order to give Cumberland a chance of being ready—to which Thomas replied,

"Very well, sir, anything to oblige you, Mr. Oaklands," muttering to himself as he went off, "wonder what that chap Cumberland is up to now: no good, I'll be bound."

In another minute we heard his voice in the lower regions, exclaiming—

"I say, Cook, mustn't dish up for the next ten minutes; Master ain't quite finished his next Sunday's sermon—he's got hitched just at thirdly and lastly, and mustn't be disturbed; not on no account;" —which produced from that functionary the following pathetic rejoinder:—

"Then, it's hall hup with the pigeon pie, for it will be burnt as black as my blessed shoe by that time!"

As I was descending the stairs, ready to go out, the next day, Oaklands called me into his room, and closing the door, said,

"Well, Fairlegh, I have thought over all you said yesterday,—made up my mind—and acted upon it."

"Bravo!" replied I, "I am so glad, for, whenever you will but rouse yourself, you are sure to act more rightly and sensibly than anybody else; but what have you done now? Let me hear all about it."

"Oh, nothing very wonderful," answered Oaklands; "when I came to look at my pocket-book, I found I had lost, from first to last, above £150."

"Good gracious!" cried I, aghast at the magnitude of the sum; "what will you do?"

Oaklands smiled at my look of horror, and continued,—

"About £100 of this I still owe Cumberland, for, after my ready money was gone, I merely set down on paper all I won or lost, as he said I could pay him at any time, just as it suited me best; and I thought I would wait till I got my next quarter's allowance, pay him out of that, and be very economical ever after. Well, when I saw what the sums amounted to, I found this plan certainly would not answer, and that I was getting into a mess; so I made up my mind to put an end to the thing at once,—and sat down to write to my father, telling him I had been playing billiards every day for some time past with a friend, (of course I did not mention who,) and that, without being at all aware of it, my losses had mounted up till I owed him £100. I mentioned at the same time, that I had a pretty long bill at Smithson's; and then went on to say, that I saw the folly, if not worse than folly, of what I had been doing; and that I applied to him, as the best friend I had in the world, (and I am sure he is too, Frank,) to save me from the consequences of my own imprudence."

"I am very glad you did that; it was much the wisest thing," interrupted I.

"As soon as I had written my letter," continued Oaklands, "I went to Cumberland, and told him that I found I had been going on over fast,—that I owned he was too good a player for me,—and that I therefore did not mean to play any more—and would pay him as soon as I received my father's answer."

"And what did he say to that?" inquired I.

"Why, he seemed surprised and a little annoyed, I fancied. He denied being the best player, and begged I would not think of paying him yet, saying that I had been unlucky of late, but that if I would go on boldly, luck was sure to change, and that I should most likely win it all back again."

"And you?"

"Oh! I told him that was the true spirit of gambling; that I did not choose to owe so much to any man as I owed him, and that pay him I would. Well then, he said, that if I did not like to trouble my father about such a trifle, and yet was determined to pay him, it could be very easily managed. I asked, how? He hummed and ha'd, and at last said that Smithson would advance me the money in a minute—that I should only have to sign a receipt for it, and need not pay him for years—not till I was of age, and not then if I did not like—that no one would be any the wiser—and he was going on with more in the same style, when I stopped him, by answering very abruptly, that such an arrangement was not to my taste, and that I was not yet reduced to borrowing money of my tailor."

"Quite right, I am so glad you told him that," interposed I; "what *did* he say then?"

"Something about not intending to offend me, and its being a thing done every day."

"By him perhaps," said I, recollecting the scene I had witnessed soon after my arrival.

"Why! what do you mean?" said Oaklands.

"I'll tell you when you have done," replied I; "but I want to know how all this ended."

"There was not much more. He tried to persuade me to go again to-day, and play another match. I told him I was engaged to ride with you. Then he looked as if he was going to be angry. I waited to see, and he wasn't, and so we parted."

"And what think you of Cumberland now?" inquired I.

"I can't say I altogether like the way in which he has behaved about this," replied Oaklands; "it certainly looks as if he would have had no objection to win as much as he could from me, for he must have known all along that he was the best player. It strikes me that I am well out of the mess, and I have to thank you for being so, too, old fellow.'

"Nay, you have to thank your own energy and decision; I did nothing towards helping you out of your difficulties."

"Indeed! if a man is walking over a precipice with his eyes shut, is it nothing to cause him to open them, in order that he may see the dangers into which the path he is following will lead him?"

"Ah! Harry, if you would but exert yourself, so as to keep your own eyes open"—

"What a wide-awake fellow you would be!" interposed Coleman,

who, after having tapped twice, without succeeding in making himself heard, (so engrossed were we by the conversation in which we were engaged,) had in despair opened the door in time to overhear my last remark:—"I say, Gents, as Thomas calls us," continued he, "what have you been doing to Cumberland, to put him into such a charming temper?'

"Is he out of humour then?" inquired Oaklands.

"I should say, *rather*," replied Coleman, winking ironically; "he came into our room just now, looking as black as thunder, and, as I know he hates to be spoken to when he is in the sulks, I asked him if you were going to play billiards with him to-day."

Harry and I exchanged glances, and Coleman continued:

"He fixed his eyes upon me, and stared as if he would have felt greatly relieved by cutting my throat, and at last growled out, 'No; that you were going to ride with Fairlegh;' to which I replied, 'that it was quite delightful to see what great friends you had become;' whereupon he ground his teeth with rage, and told me, 'to go to the devil for a prating fool;' so I answered, that I was not in want of such an article just at present, and had not time to go so far to-day, and then I came here instead. Oh, he's in no end of a rage, I know."

"And your remarks would not tend to soothe him much either," said I. "Oaklands has just been telling him, he does not mean to play billiards again."

"Phew!" whistled Coleman, "that was a lucky shot of mine; I fancied it must have been something about Oaklands and billiards that had gone wrong, when I saw how savage it made him. I like to *rile* Cumberland sometimes, because he's always so soft and silky; he seems afraid of getting into a good honest rage, lest he should let out something he does not want one to know. I hate such extreme caution; it always makes me think there must be something very wrong to be concealed, when people are so mighty particular."

"You are not quite a fool after all, Freddy," said Oaklands, encouragingly.

"Thank ye for nothing, Harry Longlegs," replied Coleman, skipping beyond the reach of Oaklands' arm.

A few mornings after this conversation took place, Oaklands, who was sitting in the recess of the window, (from which he had ejected Lawless on the memorable evening of his arrival,) called me to him, and asked in a low tone of voice, whether I should mind calling at

the billiard-rooms when I went out, and paying a month's subscription which he owed there. He added, that he did not like going himself, for fear of meeting Cumberland or the Captain, as, if they pressed him to play, and he refused, (which he certainly should do,) something disagreeable might occur, which it was quite as well to avoid. In this I quite agreed, and willingly undertook the commission. While we were talking, Thomas came into the room with a couple of letters, one of which he gave to Oaklands, saying, it had just come by the post, while he handed the other to Cumberland, informing him that the gentleman who brought it was waiting for an answer. I fancied that Cumberland changed colour slightly when his eye fell upon the writing. After rapidly perusing the note, he crushed it in his hand, and flung it into the fire, saying,—

"My compliments to the gentleman, and I'll be with him at the time he mentions."

"Well, this *is* kind of my father," exclaimed Oaklands, looking up with a face beaming with pleasure; "after writing me the warmest and most affectionate letter possible, he sends me an order for three hundred pounds upon his banker, telling me always to apply to him when I want money, or get into difficulties of any kind; and that if I will promise him that this shall be the case, I need never be afraid of asking for too much, as he should be really annoyed were I to stint myself."

"What a pattern for fathers!" exclaimed Coleman, rubbing his hands. "I only wish my old dad would test my obedience in that sort of way;—I'd take care I would not annoy him by asking for too little; he need not fret himself on that account. Ugh," continued he, with a look of intense disgust, "it's quite dreadful to think what perverted ideas he has on the subject; he actually fancies it his business to *spend* his money as well as to make it; and as for sons, the less they have the better, lest they should get into extravagant habits, forsooth! I declare it's quite aggravating to think of the difference between people: a cheque for three hundred pounds from a father, who'll be annoyed if one does not always apply to him for money enough! Open the window there! I'm getting faint!"

"Don't you think there's a little difference between sons as well as fathers, Master Fred, eh?" inquired Lawless. "I should say some sons might be safely trusted with £300 cheques; while others are certain to waste two shillings, and misapply sixpence, out of every half-crown they may get hold of."

"Sir, I scorn your insinuations; sir, you're no gentleman," was the reply, producing (as was probably intended) an attack from Lawless, which Coleman avoided for some time, by dodging round chairs and under tables. After the chase had lasted for several minutes, Coleman, when on the point of being captured, contrived, by a master-stroke of policy, to substitute Mullins in his place, and the affair ended by that worthy being knocked down by Lawless, 'for always choosing to interfere with everything,' and being kicked up again by Coleman, 'for having prevented him from properly vindicating his wounded honour.'

"Who's going near the Post Office, and will put a letter in for me?" asked Oaklands.

"I am," replied Cumberland; "I've got one of my own to put in also."

"Don't forget it or lose it, for it's rather important," added Oaklands; "but I need not caution you, you are not one of the hare-brained sort; if it had been my friend Freddy now—"

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Oaklands," said Coleman, putting on an air of offended dignity, in which, though very much exaggerated, there was at the bottom the smallest possible spice of reality, —a thing, by the way, one may often observe in people who have a very strong appreciation of the ridiculous, and who, however fond they may be of doing absurd things for the sake of being laughed at, do not approve of their buffooneries being taken for granted,— "I'll tell you what it is, sir,—you have formed a most mistaken estimate of my character; I beg to say, that any affair I undertake is certain to be conducted in a very sedate and business-like manner. My prudence I consider unimpeachable; and as to steadiness, I flatter myself I go considerably a-head of the Archbishop of Canterbury in that article. If I hear you repeat such offensive remarks, I shall be under the painful necessity of elongating your already sufficiently prolonged proboscis."

"Come and try," said Oaklands, folding his arms with an air of defiance. Coleman, reckoning on his adversary's dislike of exertion, and trusting to his own extreme quickness and activity to effect his escape scot-free, made a feint of turning away as if to avoid the contest, and then, with a sudden spring, leaped upon Oaklands, and succeeded in just touching his nose. The latter was however upon his guard, and while, by seizing his outstretched arm with one hand, he prevented him from attaining his object, he caught him by the coat-collar with the other, and detained him prisoner.

"I've got you this time, at all events, Master Freddy; now what shall I do with you, to pay you off for all your impertinence?" said Oaklands, looking round the room in search of something suitable to his purpose. "I have it," continued he, as his eyes encountered the bookcase, which was a large square-topped, old-fashioned affair, standing about eight feet high, and the upper part forming a sort of glass-fronted closet, in which the books were arranged on shelves. "Great men like you, who go ahead of Archbishops and so on, should be seated in high places." So saying, he lifted Coleman in his arms, with as much ease as if he had been a kitten; and stepping up on a chair which stood near, seated him on the top of the bookcase, with his head touching the ceiling, and his feet dangling about six feet from the ground.

"What a horrid shame!" said Coleman; "come help me down again, Harry, there's a good fellow."

"I help you down!" rejoined Oaklands, "I've had trouble enough in putting you up I think; I'm a great deal too much tired to help you down again."

"Well, if you won't, there's nobody else can," said Coleman, "unless they get a ladder or a fire-escape,—don't call me proud, gentlemen, if I look down upon you all, for I assure you it's quite involuntary on my part."

"A decided case of 'up aloft:' he looks quite the cherub, does he not?" said Lawless.

"They are making game of you, Coleman," cried Mullins, grinning.

"I hope not," was the reply, "for in that case I should be much too *high* to be pleasant."

"They ought to keep you there for an hour longer for that vile pun," said Cumberland. "Is your letter ready, Oaklands, for I must be going?"

"It is up stairs, I'll fetch it," replied Oaklands, leaving the room.

"Well, as it seems I am here for life, I may as well make myself comfortable," said Coleman, and suiting the action to the word, he crossed his legs under him like a tailor, and folding his arms, leaned his back against the wall, the picture of ease.

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the door; some one said, "Come in," and, without a word of preparation, Dr. Mildman entered the apartment. Our surprise and consternation at this apparition may easily be imagined. Cumberland and Lawless tried

to carry it off by assuming an easy, unembarrassed air, as if nothing particular was going on; I felt strongly disposed to laugh; while Mullins looked much more inclined to cry; but the expression of Coleman's face, affording a regular series of "dissolving views," of varied emotions, was the "gem" of the whole affair. The unconscious cause of all this excitement, whose back was turned towards the bookcase, walked quietly up to his usual seat, saying as he did so,

"Don't let me disturb you,—I only came to look for my eye-glass, which I think I must have dropped."

"I see it, sir," said I, springing forward, and picking it up; "how lucky none of us happened to tread on it and break it!"

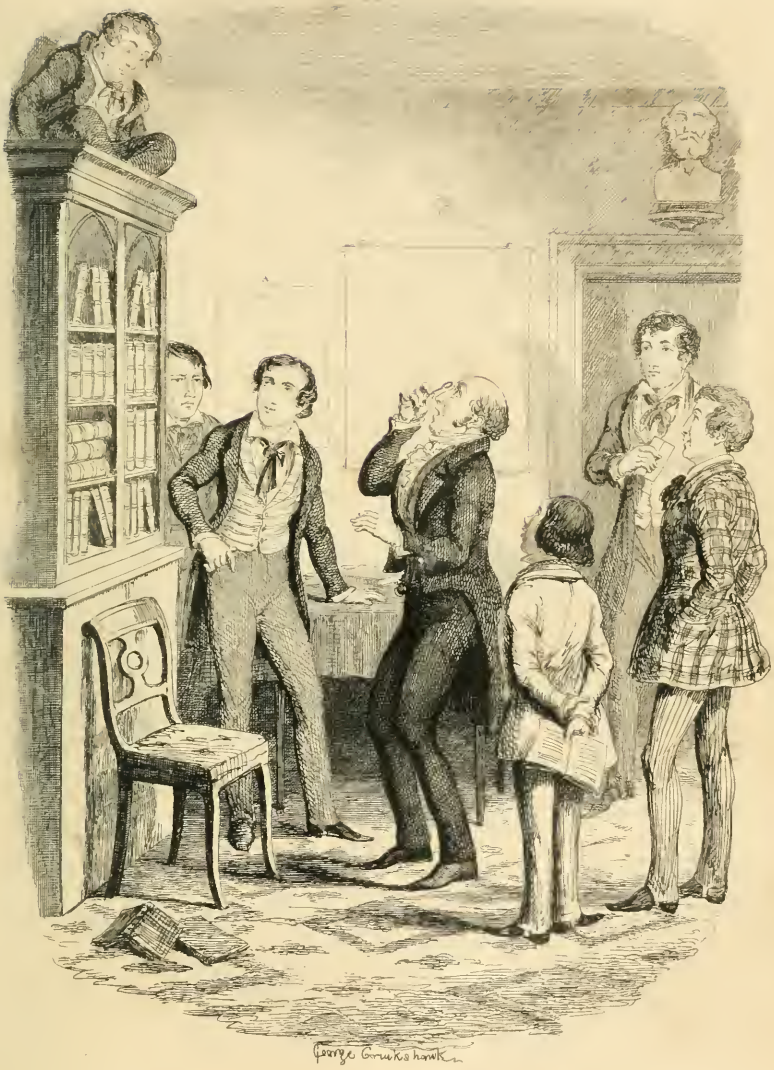
"Thank you, Fairlegh, it is an old friend, and I should have been sorry to have any harm happen to it," replied he, as he turned to leave the room, without having once raised his eyes from the ground. Coleman, who up to this moment had considered a discovery inevitable, gave me a sign to open the door, and, believing the danger over, was proceeding to relieve his feelings by making a hideous face at his retiring tutor, when the bookcase, affected no doubt by the additional weight placed upon it, suddenly gave a loud crack.

"Bless my heart," said Dr. Mildman, looking up in alarm, "what's that? Gracious me!" continued he, starting back as his eyes encountered Coleman, "there's something alive up there! why it's—eh?" continued he, levelling his newly-restored eye-glass at the object of his alarm; "yes, it certainly *is* Coleman; pray, sir, is it usually your 'custom of an afternoon,' as Shakspeare has it, to sit perched up there cross-legged, like a Chinese mandarin? it's a very singular taste."

"Why, sir," replied Coleman, for once completely taken aback, "you see I didn't—that is, I wasn't—I mean, if I had'nt—I shouldn't."

"Hum," resumed Dr. Mildman, with whom he was rather a favourite, and who, now that he had satisfied himself it was not some wild animal he had to deal with, was evidently amused by Coleman's embarrassment, "that sentence of yours is not particularly clear or explanatory; but," continued he, as a new idea occurred to him, "how in the world did you get up there? you must have flown."

"I didn't get up, I was—that is, he—" stammered Coleman, remembering just in time that he could not explain without involving Oaklands.


George Cruikshank

"And how are you ever to get down again?" said Dr. Mildman.

"Has the pretty bird flown yet?" cried Oaklands, hastily entering the room; when, observing the addition the party had received during his absence, he started back, murmuring, in an under tone, "The old gentleman, by Jove!" Quickly recovering himself, however, he sprang upon a chair, and seizing Coleman in his arms, whisked him down with more haste than ceremony; and going up to Dr. Mildman, said respectfully, "That was a bit of folly of mine, sir; I put him up there; I merely did it for a joke, and I hadn't an idea you would come in and find him."

"Never mind," replied Dr. Mildman, good-naturedly, "as you have contrived to get him down again safely, there is no harm done;" adding, as he left the room, "that young man is as strong as Hercules. I hope he'll never take it into his head to pop me up anywhere, for I am sure he could do it if he chose."

CHAPTER IX.

A DENOUEMENT.

"Play not for gain but sport; who plays for more
Than he can lose with pleasure, stakes his heart."
Herbert.

"If you are so bold as to venture a blowing-up, look closely to it! for the plot lies deadly deep; * * * but of all things have a care of putting it in your pocket, * * * and if you can shun it, read it not; * * * consider well what you do, and look to yourself, * * * for there is danger and jeopardy in it."—*Dr. Eachard.*

In the course of my walk that afternoon, I called at the billiard-rooms in F—— Street, in order to pay Oaklands' subscription. On inquiring for Mr. Johnson, the proprietor, I was told that he was engaged at present, but that if I did not mind waiting for a few minutes, he would be able to attend to me. To this I agreed, and was shown into a small room down stairs, which, from its sanded floor, and a strong odour of stale tobacco which pervaded it, was apparently used as a smoking-room. It opened into what seemed to be a rather spacious apartment, from which it was divided by a glass half-door, across the lower panes of which hung a green blind: this door, on my entrance, was standing slightly ajar. The day being cold, there was a bright fire burning on the hearth, near this I seated myself, and, seduced by its drowsy influence, fell into a kind of trance, in which, between sleeping and waking, my mind wandered away to a far different scene, among well-known forms and familiar faces, that had been strangers to me now for many a long day. From this day-dream I was aroused by sounds, which, proceeding from the adjoining apartment, resolved themselves, as I became more thoroughly awake, into the voices of two persons apparently engaged in angry colloquy.

"I tell you," said a gruff voice, which somehow seemed familiar to me—"I tell you it is the only chance for you; you must contrive to bring him here again, and that without loss of time."

"Must I again repeat that the thing is impossible?" was the reply, in tones I knew but too well; "utterly impossible; when once his

mind is made up, and he takes the trouble to exert himself, he is immovable; nothing can shake his determination."

"And is this your boasted skill and management?" rejoined the first speaker; "how comes it, pray, that this overgrown child, who seemed the other day to be held as nicely in leading-strings as need be,—this raw boy, whose hot-headedness, simplicity, and indolence rendered him as easy a pigeon to pluck as one could desire; how comes it, I say, that he has taken alarm in this sudden manner, so as to refuse to come here any more? you've bungled this matter most shamefully, sir, and must take the consequences."

"That's just the point I cannot make out," replied the second speaker, who, as the reader has probably discovered, was none other than Cumberland; "it's easy enough for you to lay it all to my mismanagement, Captain Spicer, but I tell you it is no such thing; did I not accommodate my play to his, always appearing to win by some accident, so that the fool actually believed himself the better player, while he was losing from twenty to thirty pounds a day? Didn't I excite him, and lead him on by a mixture of flattery and defiance, so that he often fancied he was persuading me to play against my will, and was so ready to bet that I might have won three times what I have of him, if you had not advised me to go on quietly, and by degrees? Did not you refuse when I wished you to take him in hand yourself, because you said I understood him best, and managed him admirably? No, I believe that detestable young Fairlegh is at the bottom of it: I observed him watching me with that calm, steadfast glance of his, that I hated him for from the first moment I saw him; I felt certain some mischief would arise from it."

"Yes!" replied Spicer, "that was your fault too: why did you let the other bring him; every fool knows that lookers-on see most of the game."

"I was afraid to say much against it, lest Oaklands should suspect anything," rejoined Cumberland; "but I wish to Heaven I had now; I might have been sure no good would come from it—that boy is my evil genius."

"I have no time for talking about geniuses, and such confounded stuff," observed Spicer, angrily, "so now to business, Mr. Cumberland: you are aware you owe me two hundred pounds, I presume?"

Cumberland grumbled out an unwilling assent, to which he appended a muttered remark not exactly calculated to enhance the Captain's future comfort.

"Like a good-natured fool," continued Spicer, "I agreed to wait for my money till you had done what you could with this Oaklands."

"For which forbearance you were to receive fifty pounds extra, besides anything you could make out of him by private bets," put in Cumberland.

"Of course I was not going to wait all that time for my money for nothing," was the reply; "you have only as yet paid me fifty pounds, you tell me you can't persuade Oaklands to play again, so there's nothing more to be got from that quarter, consequently nothing more to wait for. I must trouble you, therefore, to pay me the two hundred pounds at once: for, to be plain with you, it won't do for me to remain here any longer,—the air does not agree with my constitution."

"And where on earth am I to get two hundred pounds at a minute's notice?" said Cumberland; "you are as well aware the thing is impossible as I am."

"I am aware of this, sir," replied the Captain with an oath, "that I'll have my money; ay, and this very day too, or I'll expose you, —curse me if I don't. I know your uncle's address: yes! you may well turn pale, and gnaw your lip—other people can plot and scheme as well as yourself: if I'm not paid before I leave this place, and that will be by to-night's mail, your uncle shall be told that his nephew is an insolvent gambler; and the old tutor, the Rev. Dr. Mildman, shall have a hint that his head pupil is little better than a blackleg."

"Now listen to me, Spicer," said Cumberland quietly; "I know you might do what you have threatened, and that to me it would be neither more nor less than ruin, but—and this is the real question—pray what possible advantage (save calling people's attention to the share, a pretty large one, you have had in making me what I am) would it be to you?"

"To me, sir? eh! why, what do you mean, sir? your uncle is a man of honour, and, of course, as such would pay his nephew's debts for him, more particularly when he knows that if he refuses to do so, that nephew will be sent to jail; yes, to jail, sir."

"There; blustering is of no use with me, so you may save yourself that trouble, Captain," replied Cumberland; "as to sending me to jail, that is absurd; you can't arrest a minor for debt, and I shall not be of age these two years. My uncle is, as you say, what is called a man of honour, but he is not one of those over-scrupulous

fools who will pay any demand, however dishonest and unreasonable, rather than tarnish the family honour, forsooth! No! he will pay what the law compels him, and not a farthing more. I leave you to decide whether the law is likely to be of much use to you in the present case. Now, listen to me; though you cannot obtain the money by the means you proposed, you can, as I said before, do me serious injury; therefore, if for no other reason but to stop your mouth, I would pay you the whole if I could, but I have not the power of doing so at present. What I propose then is this—Oaklands will pay me, in a day or two, one hundred pounds; this I will hand over to you at once, and will give you a written promise to pay you the rest in the course of the next six months; for, before that time I must raise money somehow, even if I have to sell every farthing I expect to come into to the Jews, in order to do it."

"Won't do," was the reply; "the ready isn't enough; I must leave this country in a day or two, and I must have money to take with me; come, one hundred and fifty pounds down, and I'll let you off the other fifty."

"It's impossible, I can get no other money yet, excepting the sum Oaklands is to pay me."

"Yes! and how the devil am I to be sure he will pay you directly; I'm pretty certain the fool's hard up himself; he hasn't paid cash for a month past."

"If that's all you are afraid of, I can soon convince you to the contrary; here's a letter to his father's banker, which I am going to put into the post directly, with a cheque for three hundred pounds in it: there, hold it up to the light, and you can see the figures yourself."

"By Jove! so it is," exclaimed Spicer: "I say, Cumberland," he continued, and then the voices almost sunk into a whisper, so that I could not catch more than a word here and there, but by the tone I judged that the Captain was making some proposition, to which Cumberland refused to agree.

At length I heard the former say, "Fifty pounds down, and a receipt in full."

Cumberland's reply was inaudible, but when the Captain spoke again, I caught the following words—"Not the slightest risk, only you do as I say, and"—

At this moment the outer door of the room in which I was sitting opened, while the one communicating with the other apartment

was violently slammed to from the farther side, and I heard no more.

The new comer was a little slipshod girl in dirty curl-papers, who informed me that her master was sorry he could not see me that day, as he was particularly engaged, but if I would do him the favour of calling to-morrow, at the same hour, he should be at leisure, &c. To this I answered something, I scarcely knew what, and seizing my hat, rushed out at the front-door, to the great astonishment of the curl-papered damsel, who cast an anxious glance at the pegs in the hall, ere she could convince herself that I had not departed with more hats and coats than legitimately belonged to me.

It was not until I had proceeded the length of two or three streets, that I could collect my ideas sufficiently to form anything like a just estimate of the extraordinary disclosures with which I had so unexpectedly become acquainted, and no sooner had I in some measure succeeded in so doing, than the puzzling question presented itself to me, what line of conduct it would be advisable to adopt, in consequence of what I had heard. I asked myself too, to begin with, what right I had to make any use of a private conversation, which accident alone had caused me to overhear? Would not people say I had behaved dishonourably in having listened to it at all? But then again, by preserving Cumberland's secret, and concealing his real character from Oaklands, should not I, as it were, become a party to any nefarious schemes he might contemplate for the future? Having failed in one instance in his attempt on Oaklands' purse, would he not (having, as I was now fully aware, such a strong necessity for money) devise some fresh plan, which might succeed in its object, were Oaklands still ignorant of the real character of the person he had to deal with? And in such case should not I be answerable for any mischief which might ensue? Nay, for aught I knew, some fresh villany might be afloat even now; what plan could Spicer have been urging, which Cumberland seemed unwilling to adopt, if not something of this nature, and which might be prevented were Oaklands made aware of all the circumstances?

This last idea settled the business. I determined to reveal every thing to Oaklands in confidence, and to be guided in my subsequent conduct by his opinion. Having once arrived at this conclusion, the next thing was to carry my intentions into effect with as little loss of time as possible. I consequently started off at speed in a

homeward direction, and succeeded in reaching my destination in rather less than ten minutes, having, at various times in the course of my route, run against and knocked over no less than six little children, to the manifest discomposure and indignation of as many nursery-maids, who evidently regarded me as a commissioned agent of some modern Herod, performing my master's work zealously.

On arriving at home my impatience was doomed to be disappointed, for Oaklands, who had gone out soon after I did, was not yet returned. This delay, in the feverish state of anxiety and excitement in which I was, appeared to me intolerable; and, unable to sit still, I kept striding up and down the room, clenching my fists, and uttering exclamations of impatience and vexation; which unusual conduct on my part so astonished and alarmed the worthy Thomas, that, after remaining in the room till he had exhausted every conceivable pretext for so doing, he boldly inquired whether "I did not feel myself ill, no how?" adding his hope, that "I had not been a-exhaling laughing gas, or any sich rum-bustical wegitable?" after which, he favoured me with an anecdote of "a young man as he know'd, as had done so, wot conducted hisself more like a hideotic fool than a sanatory Christian, ever after." Perceiving at length that his attentions were rapidly reducing me to the same state of mind as that of his friend, he very considerately left me.

After half an hour of anxious expectation, in the course of which I must have walked at least a mile or two over Dr. Mildman's parlour carpet, Oaklands and Lawless returned together. I instantly called the former aside, and told him I wished to speak to him alone, as I had something of importance to communicate. To this he replied that it was very near dinner-time; but that, if I would come up to his room, I could talk to him while he dressed. As soon as we were safely closeted together, I began my relation, but scarcely had I got beyond "You asked me to go to the billiard-rooms, you know"—when a hasty footstep was heard upon the stairs; some one knocked at the door, and immediately a voice, which I knew to be that of Cumberland, asked to be let in, "as he had something particular to say."

"The plot thickens," said Oaklands, as, without rising from his seat, he stretched out an immense length of arm, and opened the door.

"Hear what I have to say first," cried I; but it was too late, and Cumberland entered, breathless, and with his usually sallow complexion flushed with exercise and excitement.

"The most unfortunate thing"—he began; and stopping to draw breath, he added, "I have run all the way from the post-office, as hard as my legs would carry me,—but I was going to tell you—as I went down, I met Curtis of the ——th, who told me their band was going to play in Park Square, and asked me to go with him to hear it; and I'm afraid that, as I stood in the crowd, my pocket must have been picked, for when I got to the post-office, I found that my letter, my pocket handkerchief, and I am sorry to say your letter also, had disappeared—so, remembering you had told me your letter was of importance, I thought the best thing I could do was to come home as fast as I could, and tell you."

"By Jove," exclaimed Oaklands, "that's rather a bore though; there was my father's cheque for three hundred pounds in it; I suppose something ought to be done about it directly."

"Write a note to stop the payment; and—let me see—as it is too late for the post now, if you will make a parcel of it, I'll run down and give it to the guard of the mail, begging him to deliver it himself as soon as he gets to town,—the cheque can't be presented till to-morrow morning, so that will be all right."

"What a head you have for business, to be sure!" said Oaklands; "but why should you have the trouble of taking it? I dare say Thomas will go with it when we have done dinner, or I can take it myself."

"Nay," replied Cumberland, "as I have contrived to lose your letter, the least I can do is to take the parcel; besides, I should like to speak to the guard myself, so as to be sure there's no mistake."

While this was going on, it may be imagined that my thoughts were not idle. When Cumberland mentioned the loss of the letter, my suspicions that some nefarious scheme might be on foot began for the first time to resolve themselves into a tangible form, but, when I perceived his anxiety to have the parcel intrusted to him, which was to prevent the payment of the cheque, the whole scheme, or something nearly approaching to it, flashed across me at once, and without reflecting for a moment on what might be the consequences of so doing, I said,—

"If Oaklands will take my advice, he will not intrust you with anything else, till you can prove that you have really lost the letter, as you say you have done."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst of us, it could scarcely have produced greater confusion than did this speech of mine. Oaklands sprang upon his feet, regarding me with the greatest sur-

prise, as he asked, "If I knew what I was saying?" while Cumberland, in a voice hoarse from passion, inquired, "What the devil I meant by my insolence? what did I dare to insinuate he had done with the letter, if he had not lost it?"

"I insinuate nothing," was my reply; "but I tell you plainly that I believe, and have good reason for believing, that you have not lost the letter, but given it to your gambling friend and accomplice, Captain Spicer, who, in return for it, is to give you a receipt in full for the two hundred pounds you owe him, and fifty pounds down." On hearing this, Cumberland turned as pale as ashes, and leaned on the back of a chair for support, while I continued, "You look surprised, Oaklands, as well you may; but, when you hear what I have to tell, you will see that I do not make this accusation without having good grounds to go upon."

"I shall not stay here," said Cumberland, making an effort to recover himself, and turning towards the door, "I shall not remain here, to be any further insulted; I wish you good evening, Mr. Oaklands."

"Not so fast," said Oaklands, springing to the door, and locking it; "if all this be true, and Fairlegh would not have said so much unless he had strong facts to produce, you and I shall have an account to settle together, Mr. Cumberland; you will not leave this room till I know the rights of the affair. Now, Frank, let us hear how you learned all this."

"Strangely enough," replied I; and I then gave him an exact account of all that had passed at the billiard-rooms, repeating the conversation, word for word, as nearly as I could remember it, leaving Oaklands to draw his own inferences therefrom. During the whole of my recital, Cumberland sat with his elbows resting on the table, and his face buried in his hands, without offering the slightest interruption, scarcely indeed appearing aware of what was going on, save once, when I mentioned the fact of the door between the two rooms being slightly open, when he muttered something about "what cursed folly!" When I had finished my account, Oaklands turned towards Cumberland, and asked, in a stern voice, "What he had to say to this statement?" Receiving no answer, he continued—"But it is useless, sir, to ask you: the truth of what Fairlegh has said is self-evident—the next question is, What is to be done about it?" He paused for a moment as if in thought, and then resumed—"In the position in which I now stand, forming one of Dr. Mildman's household, and placed by my father under his

control, I scarcely consider myself a free agent. It seems to me, therefore, that my course is clear; it is evidently my duty to inform him of the whole affair, and afterwards to act as he may advise. Do you agree with me, Frank?"

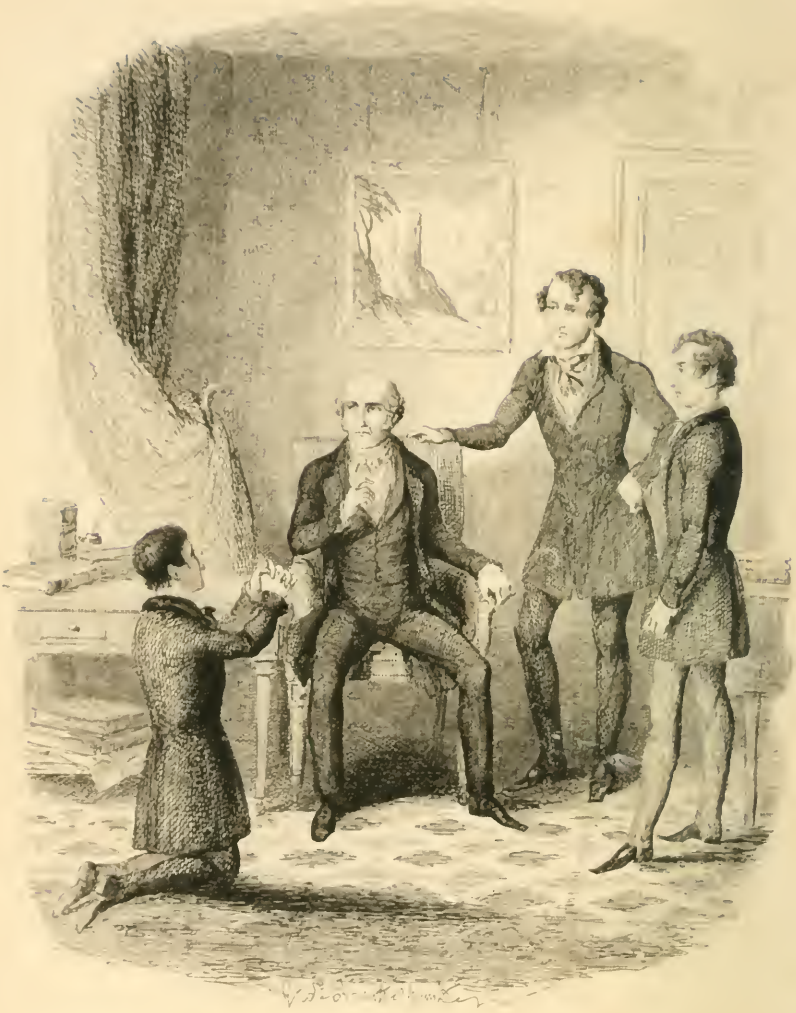
"It is exactly what I should have proposed, had you not mentioned it first," was my answer.

"For God's sake, Oaklands, don't," exclaimed Cumberland, raising himself suddenly; "he will write to my uncle,—I shall be expelled,—my character lost,—it will be utter ruin;—have pity upon me,—I will get you back your money. I will indeed, only don't tell Mildman."

"I have treated you up to the present time as a gentleman and a friend," replied Oaklands; "you have proved yourself unworthy of either title, and deserve nothing at my hands but the strictest justice; no one could blame me were I to allow the law to take its course with you, as with any other swindler, but this I shall be most unwilling to do; nothing short of Dr. Mildman's declaring it to be my positive duty will prevail upon me. But our tutor ought to be informed of it, and shall: he is a good, kind-hearted man, and if his judgment should err at all, you may feel sure it will be on the side of mercy. Fairlegh, will you go down and ask Dr. Mildman if I can speak to him on a matter of importance, now, at once? you will find him in his study. Let me know when he is ready, and we will come down; for," added he, turning to Cumberland, "I do not lose sight of you till this business is settled one way or other."

When I had told my errand, Dr. Mildman, who looked a good deal surprised and a little frightened, desired me (on receiving my assurance that the business would not do as well after dinner) to tell Oaklands to come to him immediately. To this Oaklands replied by desiring me to hold myself in readiness for a summons, as he should want me presently. Then, linking his arm within that of Cumberland, he half-led, half-forced him out of the room. In another minute I heard the study-door close behind them.

"Now, Fairlegh," said Dr. Mildman, when, in about a quarter of an hour's time, I had been sent for, "I wish you to repeat to me the conversation you overheard at the billiard-room, as nearly word for word as you can remember it." This I hastened to do; the Doctor listening with the most profound attention, and asking one or two questions on any point which did not at first appear quite clear to him. When I had concluded, he resumed his inquiries by



asking, whether I had seen the parties who were speaking. To this I answered in the negative.

"But you imagined you recognized the voices?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whose did you take them to be?"

"One I believed to be Cumberland's, the other that of a Captain Spicer, whom I had seen when I was there before."

"How often have you been there?"

"Twice, sir; once about a week ago, and again to-day."

"And have you the slightest moral doubt as to the fact of the persons you heard speaking being Cumberland and this Captain Spicer?"

"Not the slightest; I feel quite certain of it."

"That is all clear and straightforward enough," observed Dr. Mildman, turning to the culprit. "I am afraid the case is only too fully proved against you; have you anything to say which can at all establish your innocence?"

"It would be of no use if I were to do so," said Cumberland, in a sullen manner; "it is all a matter of assertion; you choose to believe what they say, and, if I were to deny it, you would not believe me without proof, and how can I prove a negative?"

"But do you deny it?" inquired Dr. Mildman, regarding him with a clear, scrutinizing look. Cumberland attempted to speak, but, meeting Dr. Mildman's eye, was unable to get out a word, and turned away, concealing his face in his handkerchief.

"This is a sad piece of business," said Dr. Mildman; "I suppose you mean to prosecute, Oaklands?"

"I shall be most unwilling to do so," was the reply; "nor will I, sir, unless you consider it my positive duty: I would rather lose the money ten times over than bring such a disgrace upon Cumberland."

"You are a kind-hearted fellow," replied the Doctor; "it really is a very difficult case in which to know how to act. As a general principle, I am most averse to anything like hushing up evil."

"For Heaven's sake have pity upon me, Dr. Mildman," cried Cumberland, throwing himself on his knees before him; "I confess it all. I did allow Spicer to keep the cheque; he threatened to expose me, and I did it to escape detection; but promise you will not prosecute me, and I will tell you where he may be found, so that something may be done about it yet. I will pay anything you please. I shall come into money when I am of age, and I can

make some arrangement. I don't care what I sacrifice, if I have to dig to earn my bread, only do not disgrace me publicly. Remember, I am very young, and oh! if you knew what it is to be tempted as I have been! Oaklands, Fairlegh, intercede for me; think how you should feel, either of you, if you were placed in my situation!"—

"Get up, Mr. Cumberland," observed Dr. Mildman, in a grave impressive manner; "it is equally needless and unbecoming to kneel to man for forgiveness—learn to consider that position as a thing set apart and sacred to the service of One greater than the sons of men,—One, whom you have indeed grievously offended, and to whom, in the solitude of your chamber, you will do well to kneel, and pray that He who died to save sinners, may, in the fulness of His mercy, pardon you also." He paused, and then resumed—"We must decide what steps had better be taken to recover your cheque, Oaklands; it is true we can send and stop the payment of it—but if you determine not to prosecute, for Cumberland's sake, you must let off this man Spicer also, in which case it would be advisable to prevent his presenting the cheque at all, as that might lead to inquiries which it would be difficult to evade. You said just now, you knew where this bad man was to be found, Mr. Cumberland."

"Yes, sir, if he is not at the billiard-rooms in F—— Street, his lodgings are at No. 14, Richmond Buildings," said Cumberland.

"Ay, exactly," replied Dr. Mildman; and resting his head upon his hand, he remained for some minutes buried in thought. Having at length apparently made up his mind, he turned to Cumberland, and said, "Considering all the circumstances of the case, Mr. Cumberland, although I most strongly reprobate your conduct, which has grieved and surprised me more than I can express, I am unwilling to urge Oaklands to put the law in force against you, for more reasons than one. In the first place, I wish to spare your uncle the pain which such an exposure must occasion him; and secondly, I cannot but hope that at your age, so severe a lesson as this may work a permanent change in you, and that at some future period you may regain that standing among honourable men, which you have now so justly forfeited, and I am anxious that this should not be prevented by the stigma which a public examination must attach to your name for ever. I will therefore at once go with you to the abode of this man Spicer, calling on my way at the house of a legal friend of mine, whom I shall try to get to accompany us. I

presume we shall have no great difficulty in procuring restitution of the stolen letter, when the culprit perceives that his schemes are found out, and that it is consequently valueless to him. Having succeeded in this, we shall endeavour to come to some equitable arrangement in regard to his claims on you—do you agree to this?" Cumberland bowed his head in token of assent, and Dr. Mildman continued—

"And you, Oaklands, do you approve of this plan?"

"It is like yourself, Doctor, the perfection of justice and kindness," replied Oaklands, warmly.

"That is well," resumed Dr. Mildman; "I have one more painful duty to perform, which may as well be done at once—you are aware, Mr. Cumberland, that I must expel you?"

"Will you not look over my fault this once?" entreated Cumberland; "believe me, I will never give you cause for complaint again."

"No, sir," was the reply; in justice to your companions I cannot longer allow you to remain under the same roof with them: it is my duty to see that they associate only with persons fitted for the society of gentlemen, amongst whom, I am sorry to say, I can no longer class you. I shall myself accompany you to town to-morrow, and, if possible, see your uncle, to inform him of this unhappy affair. And now, sir, prepare to go with me to this Captain Spicer;—on our return you will oblige me by remaining in your room during the evening. Oaklands, will you ask Lawless to take my place at the dinner table, and inform your companions that Cumberland has been engaged in an affair, of which I so strongly disapprove, that I have determined on expelling him, but that you are not at liberty to disclose the particulars. I need scarcely repeat this caution to you, Fairlegh; you have shown so much good sense and right feeling throughout the whole business, that I am certain you will respect my wishes on this head."

I murmured some words in assent, and so ended one of the most painful and distressing scenes it has ever been my fate to witness.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOATING PARTY.

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
As proudly riding o'er the azure realm;
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
Youth on the prow, and pleasure at the helm."—*Gray's Bard.*

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?"—*Henry IV.*

The dinner passed off heavily; every attempt to keep up a continued conversation failed entirely; and a general feeling of relief was experienced when the time arrived for us to retire to the pupils' room. Even here, however, the state of things was not much better. Lawless and the others having in vain attempted to learn more of the affair from Oaklands and myself than we felt at liberty to tell them, lounged over a book, or dozed by the fire; whilst we, unable to converse on the subject which alone engrossed our thoughts, and disinclined to do so upon any other, were fain to follow their example. About half-past eight, Dr. Mildman and Cumberland returned, and, after dinner, which was served to them in the Doctor's study, Cumberland retired to his room, where he remained during the rest of the evening. Oaklands then received a summons from the Doctor, and, on his return, informed us that (as we had already heard) Cumberland was to be expelled. He added that Dr. Mildman intended to take him to town himself the next morning, as he was anxious to see Cumberland's uncle, who was also his guardian: he would probably, therefore, not return till the following day, in consequence of which we should have a whole holiday, and he trusted to us to spend it in a proper manner, which, as Coleman remarked, proved that he was of a very confiding disposition indeed, and no mistake.

When we went up to bed, Oaklands beckoned me into his room, and, as soon as he had closed the door, gave me an account (having obtained Dr. Mildman's permission to do so) of the interview with Spicer. They found him, it seemed, at his lodgings, preparing for

his departure. At first he took a very high tone, denied the whole thing, and was extremely blustering and impertinent; but on being confronted with Cumberland, and threatened by Dr. Mildman's legal friend with the terrors of the law, he became thoroughly crest-fallen, restored the three hundred pound cheque, and consented, on the payment of fifty pounds, in addition to the fifty pounds he had already received, to give up all claims upon Cumberland, whereupon they paid him the money down, made him sign a paper to the above effect, and left him.

"And so, my dear Frank," said Oaklands, "there is an end of that affair, and, if it only produces as much effect upon Cumberland as it has produced upon me, it will read him a lesson he will not forget for many a long day. I blame myself excessively," he continued, "for my own share in this matter; if it had not been for my easy, careless way of going on, this scheme would never have been thought of—nay, I might, perhaps, have been able to rescue Cumberland from the hands of this sharper; but in this manner we neglect the opportunities afforded us of doing good, and—Frank," he continued, with a sudden burst of energy, "I *will* cure myself of this abominable indolence." He paused for some minutes in thought, and then added, "Well, I must not stand here raving at you any longer; it is getting very late: good night, old fellow! I shall be glad enough to tumble into bed, for I'm as tired as a dog: it really is astonishing how easily I am knocked up."

The absurdity of this remark, following upon the resolution he had expressed with so much energy but a minute before, struck us both at the same instant, and occasioned a fit of laughter, which we did not check till we recollected with what dissonance any approach to mirth must strike the ear of the prisoner (for such he was in fact, if not in name) in the adjoining apartment.

"Now, sir; come, Mr. Fairlegh, you'll be late for breakfast," were the first sounds that reached my understanding on the following morning:—I say understanding, as I had heard, mixed up with my dreams, sundry noises produced by unclosing shutters, arranging water jugs, &c., which appeared to my sleep-bewildered senses to have been going on for at least half an hour. My faculties not being sufficiently aroused to enable me to speak, Thomas continued, "You'll be late, Mr. Fairlegh;" then came an aside, "My wig, how he do sleep! I hope he ain't been a-taking lauddelum, or morpheus, or anything of a somnambulous natur. I wouldn't be master,

always to have six boys a weighing on my mind, for all the wealth of the Ingies.—Mr. Fairlegh, I say!'

"There, don't make such a row," replied I, jumping out of bed and making a dash at my clothes; "is it late?"

"Jest nine o'clock, sir; Master and Mr. Cumberland's been gone these two hours. Shocking affair that, sir; it always gives me quite a turn when any of our gents is expelled: it's like being thrown out of place at a minute's warning, as I said to Cook only this morning. 'Cook,' says I, 'life's a curious thing,' there's ——" "The breakfast bell ringing, by all that's unlucky," exclaimed I; and down stairs I ran, with one arm in, and one out of my jacket, leaving Thomas to conclude his speculations on the mutability of human affairs as he best might, solus.

"How are we going to kill time to-day?" inquired Oaklands, as soon as we had done breakfast.

"We musn't do anything to outrage the proprieties," said Coleman; "remember we are on *parole d'honneur*."

"On a fiddlestick," interrupted Lawless; "let's all ride over to the Duke of York, at Bradford, shoot some pigeons, have a champagne breakfast, and be home again in time for the old woman's feed at five o'clock. I dare say I can pick up one or two fellows to go with us."

"No," said Oaklands, "that sort of thing won't do to-day. I quite agree with Freddy, we ought not to do anything to annoy the Doctor upon this occasion; come, Lawless, I am sure you'll say so too, if you give it a moment's thought."

"Well, he's a good old fellow in his way, I know, but what are we to be at then? something I must do, if it's only to keep me out of mischief."

"It's a lovely day; let us hire a boat, and have a row," suggested Coleman.

"That's not against the laws, is it?" asked Oaklands.

"Not a bit," replied Coleman; "we used to go pulling about like bricks last summer, and Mildman rather approved of it than otherwise, and said it was a very healthy exercise."

"Yes, that will do," said Lawless; "I feel savage this morning, and a good pull will take it out of me as well as anything. Now, don't go wasting time; let's get ready, and be off;" and accordingly in less than half an hour we were prepared, and on our way to the beach.

"How are we going to do it?" inquired Lawless; "you'll take an oar Oaklands?"

Oaklands replied in the affirmative.

"Can you row, Fairlegh?"

I answered that I could a little.

"That will do famously, then," said Lawless; "we'll have a four-oar; Wilson has a capital little boat that will be just the thing; Freddy can steer, he's a very fair hand at it, and we four fellows will pull, so that we need not be bothered with a boatman. I do abominate those chaps, they are such a set of humbugs."

No objection was made to this plan. Lawless succeeded in getting the boat he wished for; it was launched without any misadventure, and we took our places, and began pulling away merrily, with the wind (what little there was) and tide both in our favour.

The morning was beautiful; it was one of those enjoyable days, which sometimes occur in early spring, in which nature, seeming to overleap, at a bound, the barrier between winter and summer, gives us a delightful foretaste of the good things she has in store for us. The clear bright sea, its surface just ruffled by a slight breeze from the south-west, sparkled in the sunshine, and fell in diamond showers from our oars, as we raised them out of the water, while the calm serenity of the deep blue sky above us appeared indeed a fitting emblem of that heaven, in which "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

The peaceful beauty of the scene seemed to impress even the restless spirits of which our little party was composed, and, by common consent, we ceased rowing, and suffered the boat to drift with the tide, merely pulling a stroke now and then to keep her head in the right direction. After drifting for some twenty minutes or so in the manner I have described, Lawless, who never could remain quiet long, dropped the blade of his oar into the water with a splash that made us all start, exclaiming, as he did so—

"Well, this may be very sentimental and romantic, and all that sort of thing, but it doesn't strike me as particularly entertaining. Why, you fellows were all asleep, I believe."

"Heigho!" exclaimed Oaklands, rousing himself, with a deep sigh, "I was in such a delicious reverie; what a barbarian you are, Lawless! you seem utterly ignorant of the pleasures of the *dolce-far-niente*."

"*Dolce-far-devilskin!*" was the reply, in tones of the greatest contempt. "I would not be as lazy as you are, Oaklands, for any money. You are fitter to lounge about in some old woman's drawing-room, than to handle an oar."

"Well, I don't know," answered Oaklands, quietly, "but I think I can pull as long as you can."

"You do, do you?" rejoined Lawless, "it will be odd to me, if you can. I don't think I was stroke-oar in the crack boat at Eton for a year, without knowing how to row a little; what do you say to having a try at once?"

"With all my heart," replied Oaklands, divesting himself of his waistcoat, braces, and neckcloth,—which latter article he braced tightly round his waist—an example speedily followed by Lawless, who exclaimed, as he completed his preparations—

"Now, you young shavers, pull in your oars, and we'll give you a ride, all free, gratis, for nothing."

Mullins and I hastened to comply with Lawless's directions, by placing the oars, and seating ourselves, so as not to interfere with the trim of the boat; while he and Oaklands, each taking a firm grasp of his oar, commenced pulling away in real earnest. They were more evenly matched than may be at first imagined, for Lawless, though much shorter than Oaklands, was very square built, and broad about the shoulders, and his arms, which were unusually long in proportion to his height, presented a remarkable development of muscle, while it was evident, from the manner in which he handled his oar, that he was the more practised rower of the two. The boat, urged by their powerful strokes, appeared to fly through the water, while cliff and headland (we were rowing along shore about half a mile from the beach) came in view and disappeared again like scenes in some moving panorama. We must now have proceeded some miles, yet still the rival champions continued their exertions with unabated energy, and a degree of strength that seemed inexhaustible. Greatly interested in the event, I had at first watched the contending parties with anxious attention, but, perceiving that the efforts they were making did not produce any visible effects upon them, and that the struggle was likely to be a protracted one, I took advantage of the opportunity to open a letter from my sister, which I had received just as I was leaving the house. I was sorry to find, on perusing it, that my father had been suffering from an inflammatory attack, brought on by a cold which he had caught in returning from a visit to a sick parishioner, through a pouring rain. A postscript from my mother, however, added, that I need not make myself in the least uneasy, as the apothecary assured her that my father was going on as well as possible, and would probably be quite restored in the course of a week or so. On observing the date of

the letter, I found I ought to have received it the day before. Arguing from this (on the "no-news being good-news" system) that I should have heard again if anything had gone wrong, I dismissed the subject from my mind, and was reading Fanny's account of a juvenile party she had been at in the neighbourhood, when my attention was roused by Coleman, who, laying his hand on my shoulder, said—

"Look out, Frank, it won't be long now before we shall see who's best man; the work's beginning to tell."

Thus invoked, I raised my eyes, and perceived that a change had come over the aspect of affairs, while I had been engaged with my letter. Oaklands and Lawless were still rowing with the greatest energy, but it appeared to me that their strokes were drawn with less and less vigour each succeeding time, while their flushed faces, and heavy breathing, proved that the severe labour they had undergone, had not been without its effect. The only visible difference between them was, that Lawless, from his superior training, had not, as a jockey would say, "turned a hair," while the perspiration hung in big drops upon the brow of Oaklands, and the knotted, swollen veins of his hands stood out like tightly-strained cordage.

"Hold hard," shouted Lawless. "I say, Harry," he continued, as soon as they had left off rowing, "how are you getting on?"

"I have been cooler in my life," replied Oaklands, wiping his face with his handkerchief.

"Well, I think it's about a drawn battle," said Lawless; "though I am free to confess, that if you were in proper training, I should be no match for you, even with the oar."

"What made you stop just then?" inquired Oaklands; "I'm sure I could have kept on for a quarter of an hour longer, if not more."

"So could I," replied Lawless, "ay, or for half an hour, if I had been put to it; but I felt the work was beginning to tell, I saw you were getting used up, and I recollected that we should have to row back with the wind against us, which, as the breeze is freshening, will be no such easy matter; so I thought if we went on, till we were both done up, we should be in a regular fix."

"It's lucky you remembered it," said Oaklands; "I was so excited, I should have gone on pulling as long as I could have held an oar; we must be some distance from Helmstone by this time. Have you any idea whereabouts we are?"

"Let's have a look," rejoined Lawless. "Yes, that tall cliff you see there is the Nag's Head, and in the little bay beyond stands the

village of Fisherton. I vote we go ashore there, have some bread and cheese, and a draught of porter at the inn, and then we shall be able to pull back again twice as well."

This proposal seemed to afford general satisfaction; Mullins and I resumed our oars, and, in less than half an hour, we were safely enseconced in the sanded parlour of the "Dolphin," while the pretty bar-maid, upon whom also devolved the duties of waitress, hastened to place before us a smoking dish of eggs and bacon, which we had chosen in preference to red herrings,—the only other dainty the Dolphin had to offer us,—Coleman observing that a "hard roe" was the only part of a herring worth eating, and we had had that already, as we came along.

"I say, my dear, have you got any bottled porter?" inquired Lawless.

"Yes, sir, and very good it is," replied the smiling damsel.

"That's a blessing," observed Coleman, piously.

"Bring us up a lot of it, my beauty," resumed Lawless, "and some pewter pots—porter's twice as good out of its own native pewter."

Thus exhorted, the blooming waitress tripped off, and soon returned with a basket containing six bottles of porter.

"That's the time of day," said Lawless; "now for a cork-screw, pretty one; here you are, Oaklands."

"I must own that is capital, after such hard work as we have been doing," observed Oaklands, as he emptied the pewter pot at a draught.

"I say, Mary," asked Coleman, "what's gone of that young man, that used to keep company along with you,—that nice young chap, that had such insinivatin ways with him?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, sir; I've nothink to say to no young man whatsumever," replied the damsel addressed, shaking her curls coquettishly.

"Ah!" sighed Coleman, "if I were but single now."

"Why, you never mean to say you've got a wife already, such a very young gentleman as you are?"

"Not only that, but a small family with a large appetite," continued Coleman, pathetically.

"Well, I never," exclaimed the bar-maid, surprised, for once, out of her company manners; then, observing a smile, at her expense, going the round of the party, she added, "I see how it is; you are making fun of me, sir; oh, fye, you're a wicked young gentleman, I know you are."

"Never mind him, my dear," said Lawless, "but give me another bottle of porter."

In converse such as this, the meal and the half dozen of porter were finished; in addition to which, Lawless chose to have a glass of brandy-and-water and a cigar. Having been rendered unusually hungry by the sea air and the unaccustomed exercise of rowing, I had both eaten and drunk more than I was in the habit of doing, to which cause may be attributed my falling into a doze; an example which, I have every reason to believe, was followed by most of the others. I know not how long my nap had lasted, when I was aroused by hearing Coleman exclaim—

"Why, I think it rains! Lawless, wake up! I don't much like the look of the weather."

"What's the row?" inquired Lawless, leisurely removing his legs from the table on which they had been resting, and walking to the window—a feat, by the way, he did not perform quite as steadily as usual. "By Jove!" he continued, "the wind's blowing great guns; we must look sharp, and be off—we shall have the sea getting up."

Accordingly, the bill was rung for and paid; Mary received half-a-crown and a kiss from Lawless, and down we ran to the beach, where difficulties we were little prepared for awaited us.

CHAPTER XI.

BREAKERS A-HEAD!

"Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground. * * * The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death."

"I have great comfort from this fellow; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him."
—*Tempest.*

THE wind, which we had observed was rising when we landed, had increased during our stay at the inn, and was now blowing almost a gale from the south-west; whilst the sea, which we had left smooth as a lake, was rolling in and breaking on the beach in somewhat formidable waves.

"I tell you what," said Coleman, as soon as he had observed the state of affairs, "I won't attempt to steer in such a sea as that; it requires great skill and judgment, besides a stronger hand than mine, to keep the boat's head right; if I were to let her turn her broadside to one of those waves, it would be a case of 'Found drowned,' with some of us, before long."

"What's to be done, then?" inquired Oaklands. "I am sure I can't do it; it's a thing I'm quite ignorant of; all my boating having been on the river."

"Let's hire one of those amphibious beggars out there to steer for us," proposed Lawless, pointing to a group of fishermen who were lounging round an old boat, not far from where we stood; "they're up to all the right dodges, you may depend. Here, my men! which of you will earn half-a-guinea, by steering our boat for us to Helmstone?"

"I wouldn't, master, for ten times the money," replied an old weather-beaten boatman, in a tarpaulin hat; "and if you'll take an old man's advice, gentlemen, you'll none of you venture out in that cockle-shell this afternoon; the wind's getting up every minute, and we shall have a rough night of it."

"Nonsense," replied Lawless; "I've often been out in worse weather than this. Are you, all of you, frightened by that old woman's croaking?" continued he, turning to the group of men.

"He's no old woman," replied a sturdy fellow, in a rough pea-jacket; "he's been a better sailor than ever you'll be, and he's right now too," he added. "It's as much as a man's life is worth to go to sea in that bit of a thing, with the waves running in as they do now,—and with such a set of landlubbers as them for a crew," he muttered, turning away.

"Suppose we try and get something to take us home by land," suggested Oaklands; "and leave the boat for some of these good fellows to bring home, as soon as the weather will allow."

"You'll have to walk, sir," replied one of them, civilly; "I don't believe there's a cart or horse in the place; they all went inland this morning with fish, and won't return till to-morrow."

"There, you hear that!" said Lawless, who had just drunk enough to render him captious and obstinate. "I'm not going to walk to please anybody's fancy; I see how it is,—I did not bid high enough. A couple of guineas for any one who will come with us," added he.

"A couple of guineas is not to be got every day," observed a sullen, downcast-looking man, who had not yet spoken; "and it is not much odds to me whether I sink or swim now; those custom-house sharks," added he, with an oath, "look so close after one, that one can't do a stroke of work that will pay a fellow now-a-days. Money down, and I'm your man, sir," he added, turning to Lawless.

"That's the ticket," said Lawless, handing him the money. "I'm glad to see one of you, at least, has got a little pluck about him. Come along."

I could see that Oaklands did not at all approve of the plan, evidently considering we were running a foolish risk; but, as nothing short of a direct quarrel with Lawless could have prevented it, his habitual indolence and easy temper prevailed, and he remained silent. I felt much inclined to object, in which case I had little doubt the majority of the party would have supported me; but a boyish dread, lest my refusal should be attributed to cowardice, prevented my doing so. With the assistance of the bystanders, we contrived to launch our little bark, without further misadventure than a rather heavier sprinkling of salt-water than was agreeable. Rowing in such a sea, however, proved much harder work than I, for one, had any idea of; we made scarcely any way against the waves, and I soon felt sure that it would be utterly impossible for us to reach Helmstone by any exertions we were capable of making.

The weather too was becoming worse every minute: it rained heavily, and it was with the greatest difficulty we were able to prevent the crests of some of the larger waves from dashing into our boat; in fact, as it was, she was already half full of water, which poured in faster than Coleman (who was the only person not otherwise engaged) could bale it out.

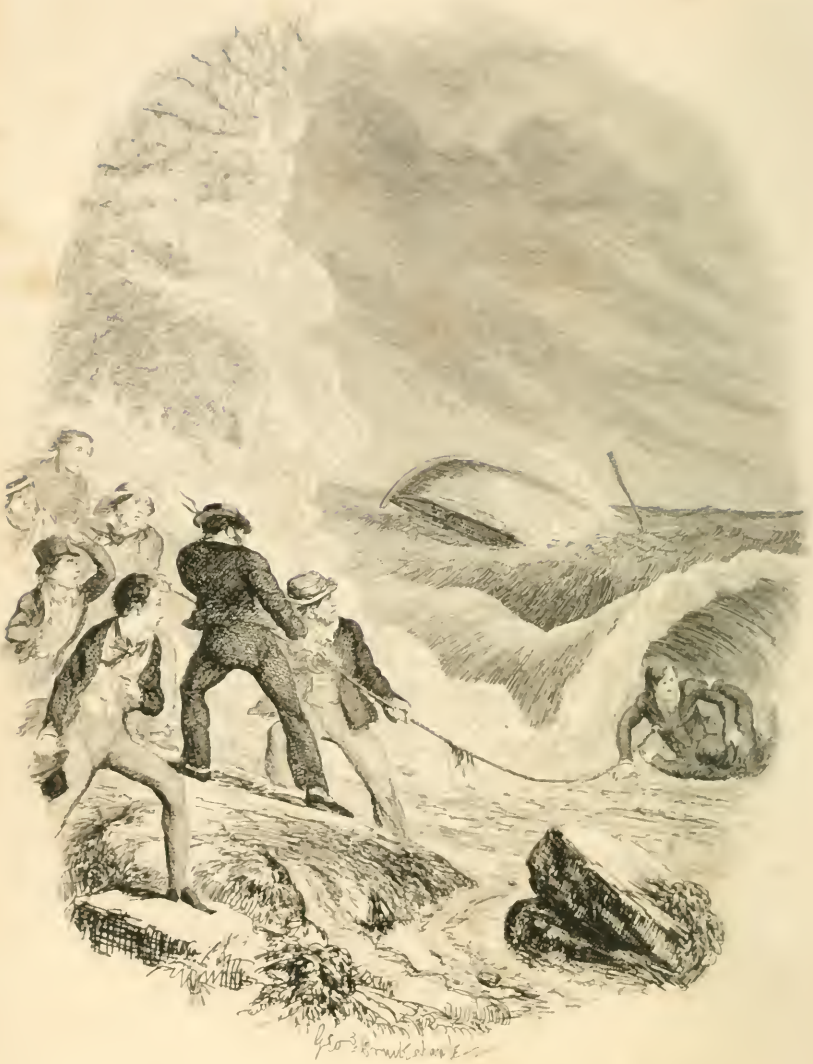
"Upon my word, Lawless, it's madness to attempt to go on," exclaimed Oaklands; "we are throwing away our lives for nothing."

"It certainly looks rather queerish," replied Lawless. "What do you say about it, my man?" he asked of the person whom he had engaged to steer us.

"I say," replied the fellow, in a surly tone, "that our only chance is to make for the beach at once, and we shall have better luck than we deserve, if we reach it alive."

As he spoke, a larger wave than usual broke against the bow of the boat, flinging in such a body of water, that we felt her stagger under it, and I believed, for a moment, that we were about to sink. This decided the question; the boat's head was put about with some difficulty, and we were soon straining every nerve to reach the shore. As we neared the beach, we perceived that, even during the short time which had elapsed since we quitted it, the sea had become considerably rougher, and the line of surf now presented anything but an encouraging appearance. As we approached the breakers, the steersman desired us to back with our oars, till he saw a favourable opportunity; and the moment he gave us the signal, to pull in as hard as we were able. After a short pause the signal was given, and we attempted to pull in as he had directed; but, in doing this, we did not act exactly in concert—Lawless taking his stroke too soon, while Mullins did not make his soon enough; consequently, we missed the precise moment, the boat turned broadside to the beach, a wave poured over us, and in another instant we were struggling in the breakers. For my own part, I succeeded in gaining my legs, only to be thrown off them again by the next wave, which hurried me along with it, and flung me on the shingle, when one of the group of fishermen, who had witnessed the catastrophe, ran in, and seizing me by the arm, in time to prevent my being washed back again by the under-tow, dragged me out of the reach of the waves.

On recovering my feet, my first impulse was to look round for my companions. I at once perceived Lawless, Mullins, and Oaklands, who were apparently uninjured, though the latter held his



hand pressed against his forehead, as if in pain; but Coleman was nowhere to be seen. "Where is Coleman?" exclaimed I.

"There is some one clinging to the boat still," observed a bystander.

I looked anxiously in the direction indicated, and perceived the boat floating bottom upwards, just beyond the line of breakers; while, clinging to the keel, was a figure which I instantly recognized to be that of Coleman. "Oh, save him, save him; he will be drowned," cried I, in an agony of fear.

"Ten guineas for any one who will get him out," shouted Lawless; but nobody seemed inclined to stir.

"Give me a rope," cried I, seizing the end of a coil which one of the boatmen had over his shoulder, and tying it round my waist.

"What are you going to do?" asked Lawless.

While he spoke a large wave separated Coleman from the boat, and as it poured its huge volume upon the beach, bore him along with it. With the swiftness of thought I sprang forward, and succeeded in throwing my arms round him, ere the next advancing wave dashed over us. And now my foresight in fastening the rope around me, proved, under Providence, the means of saving both our lives. Though thrown to the ground by the force of the water, I contrived to retain my grasp of Coleman, and we were hauled up, and conveyed beyond the reach of the surf, by the strong arms of those on shore, ere another wave could approach to claim its victims.

On recovering my consciousness, (I had been partially stunned by the violence of my last fall,) I found myself lying on the beach, with my head resting on the breast of Oaklands.

"My dear, dear Frank, thank God that you are safe!" exclaimed he, pressing me more closely to him.

"What of Coleman?" asked I, endeavouring to raise myself.

"They are taking him to the inn," was the reply; "I will go and see if I can be of any use, now I know you are unhurt; but I could not leave you till I felt sure of that."

"I fancied you seemed in pain just now," said I.

"I struck my head against some part of the boat when she capsized," returned Oaklands, "and the blow stunned me for a minute or two, so that I knew nothing of what was going on till I saw you rush into the water to save Coleman; that roused me effectually, and I helped them to pull you both out. Frank, you have saved his life."

"If it is saved," rejoined I. "Let us go and see how he is getting

on; I think I can walk now, if you will let me lean upon your arm."

With the assistance of Oaklands, I contrived to reach the inn without much difficulty; indeed, by the time I got there (the walk having served in great measure to restore my circulation), I scarcely felt any ill effects from my late exertions. The inn presented a rare scene of confusion: people were hurrying in and out, the messenger sent for the doctor had just returned, breathless, to say he was not to be found; the fat landlady, in a state of the greatest excitement, was trotting about making impracticable suggestions, to which no one paid the slightest attention, while Coleman, still insensible, lay wrapped in blankets before a blazing fire in the parlour, with the pretty bar-maid on her knees beside him sobbing piteously, as she chafed his temples with some strong essence.

"That's the time of day!" exclaimed Lawless, as his eye fell upon a printed card which the landlady had just thrust into his hand, headed, "The directions of the Humane Society for the restoration of persons apparently drowned." "We shall have it now, all right," added he, and then read as follows:—"The first observation we must make, which is most important, is, that rolling the body on a tub"—

"Bring a tub," cried the landlady, eagerly, and off started several of the bystanders to follow her injunctions—

"Is most injurious," continued Lawless; "but holding up by the legs with the head downwards"—(a party of volunteers, commanded by the landlady, rushed forward to obtain possession of Coleman's legs)—"is certain death," shouted Lawless, concluding the sentence.

While this was going on, I had been rubbing Coleman's hands between my own, in the hope of restoring circulation; and now, to my extreme delight, I perceived a slight pulsation at the wrist; next came a deep sigh, followed by a tremulous motion of the limbs; and, before five minutes were over, he was sufficiently restored to sit up, and recognize those about him. After this, his recovery progressed with such rapidity, that ere half an hour had elapsed, he was able to listen with interest to Oaklands' account of the circumstances attending his rescue, when Lawless, hastily entering the room, exclaimed—"Here's a slice of good luck, at all events; there's a post-chaise just stopped, returning to Helmstone, and the boy agrees to take us all for a shilling a head, as soon as he has done watering his horses. How is Freddy getting on?—will he be able to go?"

"All right, old fellow," replied Coleman. "Thanks to Fairlegh

in the first instance, and a stiff glass of brandy-and-water in the second, 'Richard's himself again!'"

"Well, you've had a near shave for it this time, however," said Lawless; "there is more truth than I was aware of in the old proverb, 'If you are born to be hanged, you will never be drowned;' though, if it had not been for Frank Fairlegh, you would not have lived to fulfil your destiny."

In another ten minutes we were all packed in and about the post-chaise; Coleman, Oaklands, and myself occupying the interior, while Lawless and Mullins rode outside. The promise of an extra half-crown induced the driver to use his best speed. At a quarter before five we were within a stone's throw of home; and if that day at dinner Mrs. Mildman observed the pale looks and jaded appearance of some of the party, I have every reason to believe she has remained up to the present hour in total ignorance as to their cause.

CHAPTER XII.

DEATH AND CHANGE.

"The voice which I did more esteem
Than music on her sweetest key;
Those eyes which unto me did seem
More comfortable than the day;
Those now by me, as they have been,
Shall never more be heard or seen;
But what I once enjoyed in them,
Shall seem hereafter as a dream.

"All earthly comforts vanish thus;
So little hold of them have we;
That we from them, or they from us,
May in a moment ravished be.
Yet we are neither just nor wise
If present mercies we despise,
Or mind not how these may be made
A thankful use of what we had."—*Wither.*

"Up springs at every step to claim a tear,
Some youthful friendship form'd and cherish'd here."—*Rogers.*

"Time flies away fast!
The while we never remember—
How soon our life here
Grows old with the year
That dies with the next December."—*Herrick.*

As I was undressing that night, Coleman came into my room, and grasping my hand with his own, shook it warmly, saying, "I could not go to sleep, Frank, without coming to thank you for the noble way in which you risked your own life to save mine to-day. I laughed it off before Lawless and the rest of the fellows, for when I feel deeply, I hate to show it; but indeed, (and the tears stood in his eyes while he spoke,) indeed I am not ungrateful."

"My dear Freddy," returned I, "do not suppose I thought you so for a moment; there, say no more about it; you would have done the same thing for me that I did for you, had our positions been reversed."

"I am not so sure of that," was his reply; "I should have wished to do so; but it is not every one who can act with such promptitude and decision in moments of danger."

"There is one request I should like to make," said I.

"What is it?" replied he, quickly.

"Do not forget to thank Him, whose instrument I was, for having so mercifully preserved your life."

A silent pressure of the hand was the only answer, and we parted for the night.

Owing, probably, to over-fatigue, it was some little time before I went to sleep. As I lay courting the fickle goddess (or god as the case may be, for, mythologically speaking, I believe Somnus was a *he*), I could not help contrasting my present feelings with those which I experienced on the first night of my arrival. Then, overcome by the novelty of my situation, filled with a lively dread of my tutor, bullied and despised by my companions, and separated for what I deemed an interminable period from all who were dear to me, my position was far from an enviable one. Now, how different was the aspect of affairs! With my tutor, who, from an object of dread, had become one of esteem and affection, I had every reason to believe myself a favourite; I was on terms of the closest friendship with those of my companions whose intimacy was best worth cultivating; while with the others I had gained a standing which would effectually prevent their ever venturing seriously to annoy me; and, above all, I had acquired that degree of self-confidence, without which one is alike impotent to choose the good or to refuse the evil. And it was with an honest pride that I reflected, that this improvement in my position was mainly owing to a steady adherence to those principles, which it had been the constant aim of my dear parents to instil into me from my childhood. I fell asleep at last, endeavouring to picture to myself the delight of relating my adventures on my return home; how my mother and sister would shudder over the dangers I had escaped, while my father would applaud the spirit which had carried me through them. The vision was a bright and happy one: would it ever be realized?

To our surprise, we learned the next morning that Dr. Mildman had arrived by the last coach the previous evening, having fortunately met with Cumberland's uncle at his house of business in town, and delivered his nephew into his safe custody without further loss of time. The breakfast passed over without the Doctor making any inquiry how we had amused ourselves during his absence, nor, as may easily be believed, did we volunteer information on the subject. On returning to the pupils' room, I found a letter, in my sister's hand-writing, lying on the table. With a feeling of dread,

for which I could not account, I hastened to peruse it. Alas! the contents only served to realize my worst apprehensions. My father's illness had suddenly assumed a most alarming character, inflammation having attacked the lungs with such violence, that the most active measures had failed to subdue it, and the physician, whom my mother had summoned on the first appearance of danger, scarcely held out the slightest hope of his recovery. Under these circumstances, my mother wished me to return home without loss of time, as my father, before he became delirious, had desired that I might be sent for, expressing himself most anxious to see me; and the letter concluded with a line in my mother's hand-writing, exhorting me to make every exertion to reach home without delay, if I wished to find him alive. For a minute or two, I sat with the letter still open in my hand, as if stunned by the intelligence I had received; then, recollecting that every instant was of importance, I sprang up, saying, "Where's Dr. Mildman? I must see him directly."

"My dear Frank, is anything the matter? you are not ill?" inquired Oaklands, anxiously.

"You have received some bad news, I am afraid," said Coleman.

"My father is very ill, dying perhaps," replied I, while the tears, which I in vain endeavoured to restrain, trickled down my cheeks. After giving way to my feelings for a minute or two, the necessity for action again flashed across me.

"What time is it now?" inquired I, drying my eyes.

"Just ten," replied Oaklands, looking at his watch.

"There is a coach which starts at the half-hour, is there not?"

"Yes, the Highflyer, the best drag on the road," returned Lawless, "takes you to town in five hours, and does the thing well too."

"I must go by that then," replied I.

"What can I do to help you?" asked Coleman.

"If you would put a few things into my bag for me, while I speak to the Doctor," rejoined I.

"I will go and get a fly for you," said Lawless, "and then I can pick out a nag that will move his pins a bit; that will save you ten minutes, and you have no time to lose."

On acquainting Dr. Mildman with the sad intelligence I had received, and the necessity which existed for me to depart immediately, he at once gave me his permission to do so; and, after speaking kindly to me, and showing the deepest sympathy for my distress, said he would not detain me longer, as I must have preparations

to make, but should like to see me the last thing before I started, and wish me good-bye.

I found, on reaching my own room, my carpet-bag already packed: Coleman and Thomas (whose honest face wore an expression of genuine commiseration) having exerted themselves to save me all trouble on that head. Nothing, therefore, remained for me to do, but to take leave of my fellow-pupils and Dr. Mildman. After shaking hands with Lawless and Mullins, (the former assuring me, as he did so, that I was certain not to be late, for he had succeeded in securing a trap, with a very spicy little nag in it, which would have me there in no time,) I hastened to take leave of my tutor. The kind-hearted Doctor inquired whether I had sufficient money for my journey, and begging me to write him word how I got home, shook me warmly by the hand, saying, as he did so, "God bless you, my boy! I trust you may find your father better; but if this should not be the case, remember whose hand it is inflicts the blow, and strive to say, 'Thy will be done.' We shall have you among us again soon, I hope; but should anything prevent your return, I wish you to know that I am perfectly satisfied with the progress you have made in your studies; and, in other respects, you have never given me a moment's uneasiness since you first entered my house. Once more, good-bye; and remember, if ever you should want a friend, you will find one in Samuel Mildman."

The fly-horse proved itself deserving of Lawless's panegyric, and I arrived at the coach-office in time to secure a seat outside the Highflyer. After taking an affectionate leave of Oaklands and Coleman, who had accompanied me, I ascended to my place; the coachman mounted his box, exactly as the clock chimed the half-hour the horses sprang forward with a bound, and ere ten minutes had elapsed, Helmstone lay at least a couple of miles behind us.

I accomplished my journey more quickly than I had deemed possible, and had the melancholy satisfaction of reaching home in time to receive my father's blessing. The powerful remedies to which they had been obliged to have recourse, had produced their effect; the inflammation was subdued; but the struggle had been protracted too long, and his constitution, already enfeebled by a life of constant labour and self-denial, was unable to rally. Having given me a solemn charge to cherish and protect my mother and sister, he commended us all to the care of Him, who is emphatically termed "the God of the fatherless and widow;" and then, his only earthly care being ended, he prepared to meet Death, as those

alone can do to whom "to die is gain." When the last beam of the setting sun threw a golden tint around the spire of the little village church, those lips which had so often breathed the words of prayer and praise within its sacred walls, were mute for ever, and the gentle spirit which animated them had returned to God who gave it!

In regard to this portion of my career, but little more remains to be told. My father's income being chiefly derived from his church preferment, and his charities having been conducted on too liberal a scale to allow of his laying by money, the funds which remained at my mother's disposal after winding up his affairs, though enough to secure us from actual poverty, were not sufficient to allow of my continuing an inmate of an establishment so expensive as that of Dr. Mildman. On being informed of this change of circumstances, the Doctor wrote to my mother in the kindest manner; speaking of me in terms of praise which I will not repeat, and inquiring what were her future views in regard to me; expressing his earnest desire to assist them to the utmost of his ability. At the same time I received letters from Oaklands and Coleman, full of lamentations that I was not likely to return; and promising, in the warmth of their hearts, that their respective fathers should assist me in all ways, possible and impossible. Mr. Coleman, senior, in particular, was to do most unheard-of things for me; indeed, Freddy more than hinted, that through his agency I might consider myself secure of the Attorney-Generalship, with a speedy prospect of becoming Lord Chancellor. I also found enclosed a very characteristic note from Lawless; wherein he stated, that if I really was likely to be obliged to earn my own living, he could put me up to a dodge, by which all the disagreeables of having so to do might be avoided. This infallible recipe proved to be a scheme for my turning stage coachman! After citing numerous examples of gentlemen who had done so, (amongst whom the name of a certain baronet stood forth in high pre-eminence,) he wound up by desiring me to give the scheme my serious attention, and, if I agreed to it, to come and spend a month with him when he returned home at Midsummer; by the end of which time he would engage to turn me out as finished a "Waggoner" as ever handled the ribbons. To these letters I despatched suitable replies; thanking the writers for their kindness, but refusing to avail myself of their offers, at all events for the present; and I finished by expressing a hope, that be my fate in life what it might, I should still preserve the regard and esteem of the friends whose affection I prized so highly.

For some months after my father's death, I continued to live at the rectory; Mr. Dalton, the new incumbent, who had been his curate, and was unmarried, kindly allowing my mother to remain there till her plans for the future should be so far arranged, as to enable her to determine in what part of the country it would be advisable for her to reside. It had been my father's wish and intention, when I should have attained a fit age, to send me to one of the universities; a wish my mother was most anxious to carry into effect. In order to accomplish this with her reduced means, it would have been necessary for her, not only to have practised the strictest economy, but also, in great measure, to have sacrificed my sister's education, as she would have been utterly unable to afford her the advantage of masters. To this, of course, I would not consent; after much discussion, therefore, the idea of college was reluctantly given up, and, as a last resource, my mother applied to an uncle of hers, engaged in the West India trade, begging him to endeavour to procure for me a clerkship in some mercantile establishment. She received a very kind reply, saying that, although he considered me too young at present to be chained to a desk, he should advise me to apply myself diligently to the study of French and book-keeping; and ending by offering me a situation in his own counting-house, when I should be eighteen. As my only alternative lay between accepting this offer, (however little suited to my taste,) or remaining a burden upon my mother, it may easily be imagined that I lost no time in signifying my desire to avail myself of his kindness; and, ere a couple of months had elapsed, I had plunged deeply into the mysteries of book-keeping, and could jabber French with tolerable fluency. I was still working away at "Double Entry," and other horrors of a like nature, when one morning I received a large business-like letter, in an unknown hand, the contents of which astonished me not a little, as well they might; for they proved to be of a nature once more entirely to change my prospects in life. The epistle came from Messrs. Coutts, the bankers, and stated that they were commissioned to pay me the sum of four hundred pounds per annum, in quarterly payments, for the purpose of defraying my expenses at college; the only stipulations being, that the money should be used for the purpose specified, that I did not contract any debts whatsoever, and that I made no inquiries, direct or indirect, as to the source from which the sum proceeded. In the event of my complying with these conditions, the same allowance was to be continued to me till I should have taken my degree.

The immediate consequence of this most unexpected communication was, our devoting the greater part of a morning to vain speculations as to the possible source from which this liberal offer might have proceeded. After guessing every one we could think of, likely or unlikely, we ended, as is usual in such cases, by becoming decidedly more puzzled than when we began. The only person with whom I was acquainted, possessing both the will and the power to do such a thing, was Sir John Oaklands; but he had already, in the kindest manner, tried to persuade my mother to allow me to accompany Harry to Trinity College, Cambridge, begging to be permitted to defray the expenses of my so doing himself; an offer which she (not choosing to place herself under so heavy an obligation to a comparative stranger) had, with many expressions of gratitude, declined. After consulting with our friend Mr. Dalton, it was decided that I should signify to Messrs. Coutts my readiness to comply with the required conditions, begging them to convey my best thanks to my mysterious benefactor, and to inform him that it was my intention (subject to his approval) to enter my name at Trinity, without loss of time. In answer to this, I received the following laconic epistle:—

"Messrs. Coutts beg to inform Mr. Frank Fairlegh, that, in reply to his favour of the 21st ult., they are desired to state, that the sum of four hundred pounds per annum will be placed at his disposal, whenever he applies for it."

I now resumed my studies under the superintendence of Mr. Dalton, who had taken a good degree at Cambridge; and, alike delighted at my escape from the counting-house, and anxious to do credit to my benefactor's liberality, I determined to make the best use of my time, and worked *con amore*. In this manner, the next year and a half passed away without anything worthy of remark occurring. I was happy to perceive a gradual improvement taking place in my mother's health and spirits, while Fanny was developing into a very pretty and agreeable girl.

Towards the expiration of this period, Mr. Dalton saw fit to take unto himself a wife, a circumstance which induced my mother to accept the offer of a cottage belonging to Sir John Oaklands, which was suited to her limited means. It was situated within the park gates, about a mile from Heathfield Hall, and, though small, appeared well built, and exceedingly pretty.

This was an arrangement of which I highly approved, as it enabled me to renew my intercourse with Harry, who, having left

Dr. Mildman's, was spending a few months at home with his father, previous to his matriculation at Trinity. I found him but little altered in any respect, save that he had become more manly looking. For the rest, he was just as good-tempered, kind-hearted, and, alas! indolent, as ever. He informed me that Lawless also was going to Cambridge, and that Coleman, when he learned what a party of us there would be, had been most anxious to accompany us; but his father, unfortunately, did not approve, and he was now articled to a solicitor, with a view to his succeeding eventually to his father's practice.

Time rolled on, and another three months beheld us duly installed in our rooms at Trinity, and dividing our time between reading, (more or less, in accordance with our various idiosyncrasies,) boating on the Cam, billiard-playing at Chesterton, *et hoc genus omne.*

Of the details of my college life I shall say but little, a piece of forbearance for which I consider myself entitled to the everlasting gratitude of my readers, who, if they have not had their curiosity on that subject more than satisfied by the interminable narrations of "Peter Priggins," and his host of imitators, must indeed be insatiable. Suffice it then to say, that, having from the first determined, if possible, to obtain a good degree, I made a resolute stand against the advances of Lawless, (who, in consequence of his father's having, for some reason best known to himself and the premier, received a peerage, had now become an "honourable,") and the "rowing set," amongst whom, by a sort of freemasonry of kindred souls, he had become enrolled immediately on his arrival. After several fruitless attempts to shake my determination, they pronounced me an incorrigible "sap," and, leaving me to my own devices, proceeded to try their powers upon Oaklands. They met with but little success in this quarter, however; not that with him they had any indomitable love of study to contend with, but that "all that sort of thing was too much trouble; he really didn't believe there was a single fellow among the whole lot who had the slightest appreciation of the *dolce far niente.*" When, however, they found out, that upon an emergency Harry could excel them all—whatever might be the nature of the feat to be performed—and that I could cross a country, pull an oar, or handle a bat with the best of them, they set us down as a pair of eccentric geniuses, and as such admitted us to a kind of honorary membership in their worshipful society; and thus, 'twixt work and play, the first two years of my residence at Cambridge passed happily enough.

CHAPTER XIII.

CATCHING A SHRIMP.

"Give me that boy."—*Shakspeare.*

"I was there
From college, visiting the son."—*Princess.*

"To bring in, Heaven shield us, a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing."—*Shakspeare.*

"A MIGHTY stupid chapter that last!" "True for you, reader; but how was it to be avoided? It was necessary to give you that short summary of my proceedings, the better to enable you to understand all that is to follow; and so, don't you see"——"Yes, that will do. Above all things, Master Frank, avoid being prosy; it is the worst fault an author can fall into." "Reader, you're very cross!"

It was towards the close of the long vacation, that, one morning, as I was sitting at breakfast with my mother and sister, a note was brought to me. On opening it, it proved to be from Coleman, whose father had lately taken a country-house near Hillingford, a small town about fifteen miles from Heathfield, where he was now about to give a grand ball to all the neighbourhood by way of house-warming. At this ball, Freddy (with whom I had kept up a constant correspondence, though we had never met since I left Dr. Mildman's) was most anxious I should be present, and his letter was really a masterpiece of persuasion: not only should I meet all the beauty and fashion of the county, but he had for some days past employed himself in paving the way for me with several of the most desirable young ladies of his acquaintance, who were now, as he assured me, actually pining to be introduced to me. Moreover, the Honourable George Lawless had promised to be there; so we were safe for fun of some sort, Lawless's tastes and habits being about as congenial to the atmosphere of a ball-room, as those of a bull to the interior of a china-shop.

These manifold temptations, together with the desire of again

meeting Freddy himself, proved irresistible, and I decided to go. Oaklands, who had received a similar invitation, was unluckily not able to accept it, as his father had fixed a shooting-party for that day, at which, and at the dinner that was to follow, Harry's presence was indispensable.

It was in the afternoon of a glorious September day that I set off on horseback for Hillingford. I had accompanied the sportsmen in the morning, and had walked just enough to excite without fatiguing myself; and now the elastic motion of the horse (a valuable hunter of Sir John's),—the influence of the fair scene around me, as I cantered over the smooth turf of Heathfield-park, and along the green lanes beyond it,—the prospect of seeing again an old companion of my boyhood's days,—all contributed to produce in me an exhilaration of spirits which seemed to raise me above the "*kleinigkeiten*," the littlenesses (as the Germans so well express it) of this world, and to exalt me to some higher and nobler sphere. Out of this day-dream I was at length aroused by the clatter of horses' feet, and the rattle of wheels in the lane behind me, while a man's voice, in tones not of the most gentle description, accosted me as follows:—"Now then, sir, if you've got a license to take up the whole road, I'll just trouble you to show it!" With a touch of the spur I caused my horse to bound on one side, and, as I did so, I turned to look at the speaker. Perched high in mid-air, upon some mysterious species of dog-cart, bearing a striking resemblance to the box of a mail-coach, which had contrived, by some private theory of development of its own, to dispense with its body, while it had enlarged its wheels to an almost incredible circumference; perched on the top of this remarkable machine, and enveloped in a white great-coat undermined in every direction by strange and unexpected pockets, was none other than the Honourable George Lawless! The turn-out was drawn by a pair of thorough-breds, driven tandem, which were now (their irascible tempers being disturbed by the delay which my usurpation of the road had occasioned) relieving their feelings by executing a kind of hornpipe upon their hind-legs. The equipage was completed by a tiger, so small, that beyond a vague sensation of top-boots and a livery hat, one's senses failed to realize him.

"Why, Lawless!" exclaimed I, "you are determined to astonish the natives, with a vengeance: such a turn-out as that has never been seen in these parts before, I'm certain."

"Frank Fairlegh, by Jove! How are you, old fellow? Is it

my trap you're talking about? what do you think of it? rather the thing, is'nt it, eh?" I signified my approval, and Lawless continued, "Yes, it's been very much admired, I assure you;—quiet, mare! quiet!—not a bad sort of dodge to knock about in, eh?—What are you at, fool?—Tumble out Shrimp, and hit Spiteful a lick on the nose—he's eating the mare's tail. Spicey tiger, Shrimp—did you ever hear how I picked him up?" I replied in the negative, and Lawless resumed—

"I was down at Broadstairs, the beginning of the long—wretched place, but I went there for a boat-race with some more fellows; well, of course, because we wanted it to be fine, the weather turned sulky, and the boat-race had to be put off; so, to prevent ourselves from going melancholy mad, we hired a drag, and managed to get together a team, such as it was. The first day we went out they elected me waggoner, and a nice job I had of it; three of the horses had never been in harness before, and the fourth was a bolter. It was pretty near half an hour before we could get them to start; and, when they were off, I had enough to do to keep their heads out of the shop windows. However, as soon as they began to get warm to their work, things improved, and we rattled along merrily. We were spinning away at about twelve miles an hour, when, just as we were getting clear of the town, we came suddenly upon a covey of juvenile blackguards, who were manufacturing dirt pies right in the centre of the road. As soon as I saw them, I sung out to them to clear the course, but before they had time to cut away, we were slap into the middle of them. Well, I thought it was going to be a regular case of Herod, and that there would be at least half-a-dozen of them spifflicated, but they all managed to save their bacon except Shrimp,—one of the wheels went over him, and broke him somewhere. Where was it, Shrimp?"

"Left arm, sir, if you please," replied Shrimp, in a shrill treble.

"Ay, so it was," continued Lawless. "As soon as I could contrive to pull up, I sent the groom back, with orders to find a doctor, get the boy repaired, and tell them to come to me at the hotel in the morning, and I'd pay for all damages. Accordingly, while I was eating my breakfast next morning, an amphibious old female in a blue pea-jacket was shown in to me, who stated she was Shrimp's mother. First, she was extremely lachrymose, and couldn't speak a word; then she got the steam up, and began slanging me till all was blue: I was 'an unchristianlike, hard-hearted, heathen Turk,

so I was, and I'd been and spiled her sweet boy completely, so I had; such a boy as he was too, bless him; it was quite a sight to hear him say his Catechism; and as to reading his book, he'd beat the parson himself into fits at it.' Fortunately for me, she was a little touched in the wind, and when she pulled up to take breath for a fresh start, I managed to cut in. 'I tell you what it is, old lady,' said I, 'there's no need for you to put yourself into a fury about it; misfortunes will happen in the best-regulated families, and it seems to me a boy more or less can make no great odds to any one—no fear of the breed becoming extinct just at present, if one may judge from appearances; however, as you seem to set a value upon this particular boy, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll *buy* him of you, and then, if anything should go wrong with him, it will be my loss, and not yours. I'll give you twenty pounds for him, and that's more than he would be worth if he was sound.' By Jove, the old girl brightened up in a moment, wiped her eyes with the sleeve of her coat, and said—'Five pounds more, and it's a bargain.' And the end of it all was, the brat got well before I left the place; I paid the old woman her money, and brought Shrimp away with me, and it hasn't turned out such a bad spec either, for he makes a capital tiger; and now I've broken him in, I would not take twice the money for him. You'll be at old Coleman's hop to-night, I suppose: so bye! bye! for the present."

Thus saying, he drew the whip lightly across the leader's back, the horses sprang forward, and in another moment he was out of sight.

Half an hour's ride brought me within view of Elm Lodge, the house lately taken by Mr. Coleman, senior. As I rang at the bell, a figure leaped out of one of the front windows, and came bounding across the lawn to meet me, and in another minute my hand was seized, and my arm nearly shaken off, by Coleman.

"Freddy, old boy!" "Frank, my dear old fellow!" were our mutual exclamations, as we once more shook hands with an energy which must have highly edified a pompous footman, whom my ring had summoned. After the first excitement of our meeting had a little subsided, we found time to examine each other more minutely, and note the changes a couple of years had wrought in us. Coleman was the first to speak.

"Why, Frank, how you are altered!"

"If you were but decently civil, you would say 'improved' instead of 'altered,'" replied I; "but you'll never learn manners."

"Oh, if you want compliments, I'll soon get up a few, but it strikes me they are not required. A man with such a face and figure as yours soon finds out that he is a deucedly good-looking fellow. Why, how high do you stand?"

"About six feet without my boots," replied I, laughing at Coleman, who kept turning me round, and examining me from top to toe, as if I had been some newly-discovered animal.

"Well, you are a screamer, and no mistake," exclaimed he at length. "Be merciful towards the young ladies to-night, or the floor will be so cumbered with the heaps of slain, that we shall have no room to dance."

"Never fear," rejoined I, "the female breast is not so susceptible as you imagine; and I'll back your bright eyes and merry smile to do more execution than my long legs and broad shoulders any day."

"No soft sawder, Master Frank, if you please; it's an article for which I've a particular distaste: people never make pretty speeches to one's face without laughing at one behind one's back afterwards, by way of compensation."

"Which rule of course applies to the remarks you have just been making about me," returned I.

"You've caught me there fairly," laughed Coleman; "but come along in now, I want to introduce you to my mother and the governor; they are longing to see you, after all I've told them about you, though I can't say you look much like the thin delicate youth I have described you."

Mr. Coleman, who was a short, stout, red-faced old gentleman, with a bald head, and a somewhat pompous manner, came forward and welcomed me warmly, saying all sorts of complimentary things to me, in extremely high-flown and grandiloquent language; and referring to my having saved his son's life, in doing which, however, he quite won my heart, by the evident pride and affection with which he spoke of Freddy. The lady of the house was a little, round, merry-looking woman, chiefly remarkable (as I soon discovered) for a peculiar mental obliquity, leading her always to think of the wrong thing at the wrong time, whereby she was perpetually becoming involved in grievous colloquial entanglements, and meeting with innumerable small personal accidents, at which no one laughed so heartily as herself.

About half-past nine that evening, some of the guests began to arrive, amongst the foremost of whom was Lawless, most expen-

sively got up for the occasion, in a stock and waistcoat, which, as Coleman observed, required to be seen ere they could be believed in. As the arrivals succeeded each other more rapidly, and the rooms began to fill, Lawless took me by the arm, and led me to a corner, whence, unnoticed ourselves, we could observe the whole scene.

"This will be a very full meet, Fairlegh," he began; "I'm getting confoundedly nervous, I can tell you; I'm not used to this sort of affair, you know; I used always to shirk everything of the kind, but my *Mater* has got it into her head, since she's become 'My Lady,' that she must flare up and give balls, because 'ladies of rank always do so,' forsooth; and so she's taken me in hand, to try and polish me up into something like 'a man of fashion,' as she calls those confounded puppies one sees lounging about drawing-rooms. Well, as I didn't like to rile the old woman by refusing to do what she wanted, I went to a French mounseer, to teach me my paces; I've been in training above a month, so I thought I'd come here, just as a sort of trial to see how I could go the pace."

"This is your *début*, in fact," returned I.

"My how much?" was the reply. "Oh, I see, starting for the maiden stakes, for untried horses only—that sort of thing—eh? Yes, it's the first time I've been regularly entered; I hope I shan't bolt off the course; I feel uncommon shy at starting, I can assure you."

"Oh, you'll do very well when you're once off; your partner will tell you if you are going to make any mistake," replied I.

"My partner, eh? You mean one of those white-muslined young ladies, who is to run in double-harness with me, I suppose?—that's another sell;—I shall be expected to talk to her, and I never know what to say to women; if one don't pay 'em compliments, and do a bit of the sentimental, they set you down as a brute directly. What an ass I was to come here! I wish it was bed-time!"

"Nonsense, man; never be afraid!" exclaimed Freddy, who had just joined us; "I'll pick you out a partner who's used to the thing, and will do all the talking herself, and be glad of the opportunity of giving her tongue a little exercise; and here comes the very girl, of all others—Di Clapperton." Then turning towards a tall showy-looking girl, who had just arrived, he addressed her with—"Delighted to see you, Miss Clapperton; a ball-room never appears to me properly arranged till it is graced by your presence: here's my friend, the Hon. George Lawless, dying to be introduced to you."

"Pleasure—ar—dancing—with you, eh?" muttered the Hon. George, giving a little quick nod between each word, and getting very red in the face.

The young lady smiled a gracious assent, and saying, "I think they are forming a quadrille,—shall we take our places?"—marched him off in triumph.

"Frank, are you provided; or can I do anything for you?" inquired Coleman.

"Who is that interesting-looking girl, with dark hair?" asked I, in return.

"What, the she-male with the white camelia in her head, leaning on the arm of that old fellow with a cast-iron face? What a splendid pair of eyes she has got! I'll find out her name, and get you introduced," replied Coleman, disappearing in the crowd. In a minute or two he returned, and informed me the young lady's name was Saville. "You've not made such a bad hit either," continued he; "they tell me she's to be a great heiress, and old Ironsides there is her guardian. They say, he keeps her shut up so close that nobody can see her; he would hardly let her come to-night, only he's under some business obligations to my governor, and he persuaded him to bring her, in order to give me a chance, I suppose."

"What an expression of sadness there is in those deep blue eyes of hers! I am afraid she is not happy, poor thing!" said I, half thinking aloud.

"Why, you're getting quite romantic about it!" returned Coleman; "for my part, I think she looks rather jolly than otherwise; —see how she is laughing with my cousin Lucy; by Jove, how her face lights up when she smiles!—she's very decidedly pretty. Well, will you be introduced?—they are going to waltz."

I signified my assent, and Coleman set off in search of his father to perform the ceremony, not having courage enough himself to face "old Stiff-back," as he irreverently termed the young lady's guardian.

"I am sorry to refuse your young friend, Mr. Coleman," was the reply to my introduction; "but Miss Saville never waltzes."

"Come, don't be crabbed, Vernor; young people ought to enjoy themselves; recollect, we were young ourselves once!"

"If old Time had dealt as leniently by me, as he seems to have done by you, Coleman, I should consider myself young yet," replied Mr. Vernor. "I believe I have spoken my ward's wishes upon this point; but, if it would be more satisfactory to your friend to hear

her decision from her own lips, I can have no objection.—Clara, my dear, this gentleman, Mr. Fairlegh, does you the honour of wishing to waltz with you."

Thus accosted, Miss Saville raised her eyes to my face for a moment, and instantly casting them down again, coloured slightly, as she replied—"If Mr. Fairlegh will excuse me, I had rather not waltz."

I could, of course, only bow in acquiescence, and was turning away, when old Mr. Coleman stopped me with—

"There, wait a minute, Mr. Fairlegh; my little niece, Lucy Markham, will be only too glad to console you for your disappointment; she's never so happy as when she's waltzing."

"If you are impertinent, uncle, I'll make you waltz with me till you're quite tired, by way of punishment!" replied his niece, as she accepted my proffered arm.

During a pause in the waltz, I referred to the refusal just received, and asked my partner, (a lively little brunette, with very white teeth, and a bewitching smile,) whether her friend Miss Saville were not somewhat of a prude?"

"Poor dear Clara—a prude?—oh no!" was the reply. "You mean because she would not waltz, I suppose?"

I bowed my head in assent, and she continued:

"I gave you credit for more penetration, Mr. Fairlegh; did you not see it was all that horrible Mr. Vernor, her guardian?—he chose her not to waltz; and she is too much afraid of him to dare to do anything he does not approve;—he would hardly let her come here to-night, only uncle Coleman worried him into it."

"She is exceedingly pretty," remarked I; "there is something peculiar in the expression of those beautiful blue eyes, which particularly pleases me; an earnest trustful look, which—you will laugh at what I am going to say—which I have never seen before, except in the eyes of a dog!"

"Oh! I know so well what you mean," replied my partner; "I have observed it often, but I never should have known how to express it. What a good idea!"

"May I ask whether you are very intimate with her? Is she an old friend of yours?"

"No, I never saw her till my uncle took this house; but Mr. Vernor sometimes brings her with him when he drives over on business, and she comes and sits with me, while they are puzzling about their parchments. I like her so much, she seems as agreeable and good, as she is pretty."

"How is it," asked I, "that my friend Freddy did not know her by sight even?—he had to inquire her name this evening."

"Why, Frederick is generally obliged to be in town, you know; and I have observed that, when he is down here, Mr. Vernor never brings her with him."

"He had better make a nun of her at once," said I.

"Perhaps she won't be a nun!" said, or rather sang Lucy. And here we joined the waltzers again, and the conversation ended.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BALL.

"I could be pleased with any one,
Who entertained my sight with such gay shows
As men and women, moving here and there;
That coursing one another in their steps,
Have made their feet a tune."—*Dryden.*

"And run thro' fire I will for thy sweet sake."

"Come now, what * * * shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours,
Between our after-supper and bed-time?"—
Midsummer Night's Dream.

"By Jove! this is hot work!" exclaimed Lawless, flinging himself down on a sofa so violently, as to make an old lady, who occupied the farther end of it, jump to an extent which seriously disarranged an Anglo-Asiatic nondescript, believed in by her as a turban, wherewith she had adorned her aged head. "If I have not been going the pace like a brick for the last two hours, it's a pity; what a girl that Di Clapperton is to step out!—splendid action she has, to be sure, and giving tongue all the time too. She's in first-rate training, 'pon my word; I thought she'd have sewn me up at one time—the pace was terrific. I must walk into old Coleman's champagne before I make a fresh start; when I've recovered my wind, and got a mouthful of hay and water, I'll have at her again, and dance till all's blue before I give in."

"My dear fellow," said I, "you must not dance all the evening with the same young lady; you'll have her brother call upon you the first thing to-morrow morning to know your intentions."

"He shall very soon learn them as far as he is concerned, then," replied Lawless, doubling his fist. "Let me have him to myself for a quiet twenty minutes, and I'll send him home with such a face on him, that his nearest relations will be puzzled to recognise him for the next month to come at least. But what do you really mean?"

"That it's not etiquette to go on dancing with one young lady the whole evening; you must ask some one else."

"Have all the bother to go over again, eh? what a treat! Well, we live and learn; it will require a few extra glasses of champagne to get the steam up to the necessary height, that's all. And there they are going down to supper; that's glorious!" and away he bounded to secure Miss Clapperton's arm, while I offered mine to the turbaned old lady, to compensate for her late alarm.

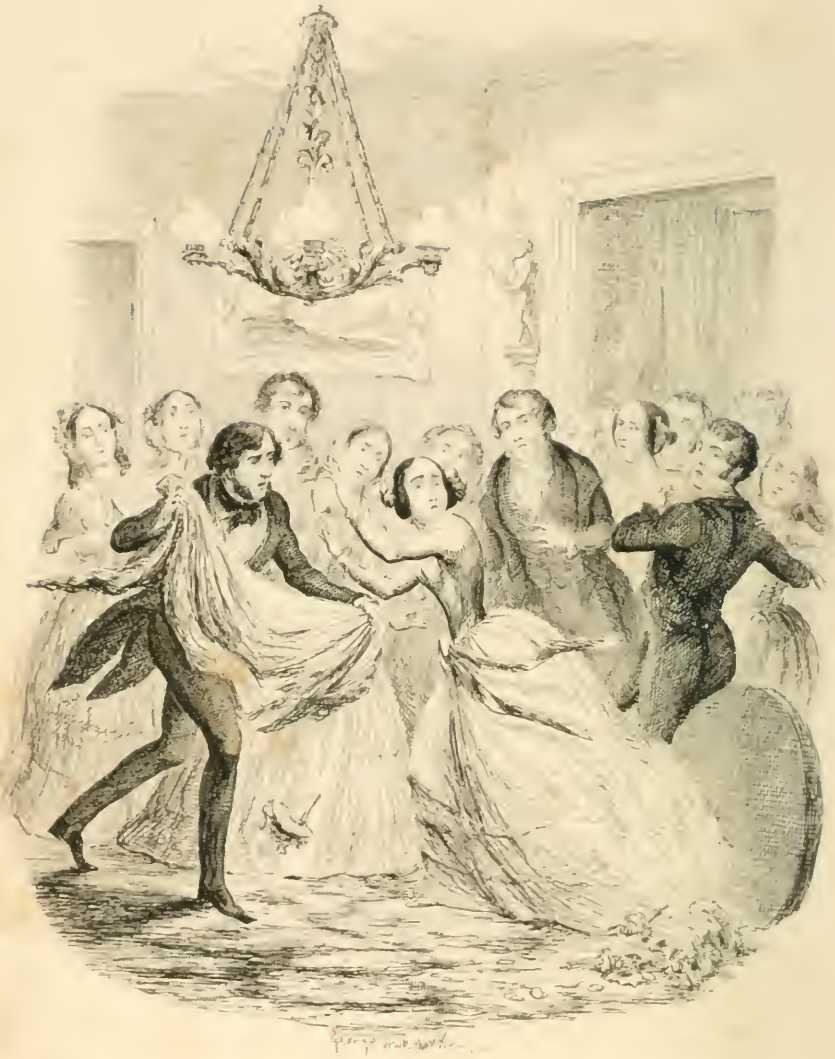
After supper the dancing was resumed with fresh energy, the champagne having produced its usual exhilarating effects upon the exhausted frames of the dancers. Notwithstanding my former repulse, I made a successful attempt to gain Miss Saville's hand for a quadrille, though I saw, or fancied I saw, the scowl on Mr. Vernor's sour countenance grow deeper, as I led her away. My perseverance was not rewarded by any very interesting results, for my partner, who was either distressingly shy, or acting under constraint of some kind, made monosyllabic replies to every remark I addressed to her, and appeared relieved when the termination of the set enabled her to rejoin her grim protector.

"Of all the disagreeable faces I ever saw, Mr. Vernor's is the most repulsive," said I to Coleman; "were I a believer in the power of the 'evil eye,' he is just the sort of looking person I should imagine would possess it. I am certain I have never met him before, and yet, strange to say, there is something which appears familiar to me in his expression, particularly when he frowns."

"He is a savage-looking old Guy," replied Freddy, "and bullies that sweet girl shockingly, I can see. I should feel the greatest satisfaction in punching his head for him, but I suppose it would be hardly the correct thing on so short an acquaintance, and in my father's house too; eh?"

"Not exactly," replied I, turning away with a smile.

When Lawless made his appearance after supper, it was evident by his flushed face, and a slight unsteadiness in his manner of walking, that he had carried his intentions with regard to the champagne into effect; and, heedless of my warning, he proceeded to lay violent siege to Miss Clapperton, to induce her to waltz with him. I was watching them with some little amusement, for the struggle in the young lady's mind between her sense of the proper, and her desire to waltz with an Honourable, was very apparent, when I was requested by Mrs. Coleman to go in search of a cloak appertaining to the turbaned old lady, whom I had escorted down to supper, and who, being delicate in some way or other, required especial care in packing up. Owing to a trifling mistake of Mrs. Coleman's, (who



had described a red worsted shawl as a blue cloth cloak, which mistake I had to discover and rectify,) my mission detained me some minutes. As I re-entered the ball-room, shawl in hand, I was startled by the crash of something heavy falling, followed by a shriek from several of the ladies at the upper end of the room; and on hastening to the scene of action, I soon perceived the cause of their alarm.

During my absence, Lawless, having succeeded in overcoming Miss Clapperton's scruples, had recommenced waltzing with the greatest energy; but unfortunately, after going round the room once or twice, "the pace," as he called it, becoming faster at every turn, the combined effects of the champagne and the unaccustomed exercise rendered him exceedingly giddy, and just before I entered the room, he had fallen against a small table supporting a handsome China candelabrum, containing several wax lights, the overthrow of which had occasioned the grand crash I had heard. The cause of the shriek, however, still remained to be discovered, and a nearer approach instantly rendered it apparent. One of the wax candles, which had not been extinguished in its fall, had rolled against the ball-dress of Miss Saville, who happened to be seated next the table, and set it on fire. After making an ineffectual attempt to put it out with her hands, she became alarmed, and as I approached, started wildly up, with the evident intention of rushing out of the room. Without a moment's hesitation, I sprang forward, caught her in my arms, and flinging the worsted shawl over her dress, which was just beginning to blaze, enveloped her in it, and telling her if she only remained quiet she would be perfectly safe, laid her on the floor, while I continued to hold the thick shawl tightly down, till, to my very great delight, I succeeded in extinguishing the flames.

By this time several gentlemen had gathered round us, eager with their advice and offers of assistance. Having satisfied myself that the danger was entirely over, I raised Miss Saville from the ground, and, making my way through the crowd, half led, half carried her to the nearest sofa. After placing her carefully upon it, I left her to the care of Mrs. Coleman and Lucy Markham, while I sought out the turbaned old lady, whose shawl I had so unceremoniously made use of, and succeeded in making my peace with her, though, I believe, in her own secret breast, she considered Miss Saville's safety dearly purchased at the expense of her favourite whittle. As I approached the sofa again, the

following words, in the harsh tones of Mr. Vernor's voice, met my ear:—

"I have ascertained our carriage is here; as soon, therefore, as you feel strong enough to walk, Clara, my dear, I should advise your accompanying me home; quiet and rest are the best remedies after such an alarm as this."

"I am quite ready, sir," was the reply, in a faint tone of voice.

"Nay, wait a few minutes longer," said Lucy Markham, kindly; "you are trembling from head to foot even yet."

"Indeed I am quite strong; I have no doubt I can walk now," replied Miss Saville, attempting to rise, but sinking back again almost immediately from faintness.

"Can I be of any assistance?" inquired I, coming forward.

"I am obliged to you for the trouble you have already taken, sir," answered Mr. Vernor, coldly, "but will not add to it. Miss Saville will be able to proceed with the assistance of my arm in a few minutes."

After a short pause, the young lady again announced her readiness to depart; and, having shaken hands with Mrs. Coleman and Lucy Markham, turned to leave the room, leaning on Mr. Vernor's arm. As I was standing near the door, I stepped forward to hold it open for them, Mr. Vernor acknowledging my civility by the slightest imaginable motion of the head. Miss Saville, as she approached me, paused for a moment, as if about to speak, but, apparently relinquishing her intention, merely bowed, and passed on.

"Well, if it's in that sort of way fashionable individuals demonstrate their gratitude for having their lives saved, I must say I don't admire it," exclaimed Coleman, who had witnessed the cool behaviour of Mr. Vernor and his ward; "it may be very genteel, but, were I in your place, I should consider it unsatisfactory in the extreme, and allow the next inflammable young lady who might happen to attract a spark in my presence, to consume as she pleased, without interfering; and peace be to her ashes!"

"It was most fortunate that I happened to have that thick shawl in my hand," said I; "in another minute her whole dress would have been in a blaze, and it would have been next to impossible to save her. What courage and self-command she showed! she never attempted to move after I threw the shawl around her, till I told her all danger was over."

"Very grand, all that sort of thing," returned Freddy; "but for my own part I should like to see a little more feeling. I've no taste

for your 'marble maidens;' they always put me in mind of Lot's wife."

"Eh! Mrs. Lot?" interrupted Lawless, coming up to us: "why was she like me? do you give it up? Because she got into a pretty pickle,—there's a riddle for you. I say, I made a nice mess of it just now, didn't I? that's what comes of going to these confounded balls. The fact was," he continued, sinking his voice, "the filly bolted with me; she took uncommon kindly to the champagne at supper; in consequence, she was so fresh when we started, that I couldn't hold her; she kept pushing on faster and faster, till at last she was fairly off with me; we did very well as long as we stuck to the open country, but at last we contrived to get among some very awkward fences; the first stiff bit of timber we came to, she made a rush at, and down we came, gate—I mean, table, candlestick, and all, a regular smash; and to make matters worse, one of the candles set the other young woman's petticoat alight."

"In fact, after a very severe run, you were nearly being in at the death," suggested Coleman.

"By Jove, it was nothing to laugh at though," remarked Lawless; "she'd have been regularly cooked, if Frank Fairlegh hadn't put her out when he did, and I should have been tried for 'Unjustifiable Girl-icide,' or 'Maliciously setting fire to a marriageable female,' or some such thing; and I dare say the young woman wasn't insured anywhere: I should have got into a pretty mess; it would have been a worse job than breaking Shrimp."

"Frederick, look here!" cried Lucy Markham, who was passing the place where we stood; "see how Mr. Fairlegh's sleeve is scorched; surely," she continued, turning to me, "your arm must be injured."

"It begins to feel rather painful," replied I; "but I daresay it's nothing to signify."

"Come to my room," exclaimed Freddy, anxiously, "Why did you not mention it before?"

"Really I scarcely felt it in the excitement of the moment," returned I; "it can't be of any consequence."

"On removing the coat-sleeve, however, a somewhat considerable burn was apparent, extending about half way from the wrist to the elbow, and which, the moment it was exposed to the air, became excessively painful.

Fortunately, amongst the guests who had not yet taken their departure, was the surgeon of the neighbourhood, who was speedily

summoned, and who, after having applied the proper remedies, recommended me to carry my arm in a sling for a few days, at the end of which time, he assured me, it would cause me little inconvenience.

As it was, by great good luck, my left arm which was injured, I submitted to this mandate with tolerable resignation, and returned to the drawing-room to be pitied by the tongues of the old, and the bright eyes of the young ladies, to an extent which (as at that time of day I was somewhat addicted to the vice of shyness) was more flattering than agreeable.

It was between two and three o'clock when Lawless and I prepared to take our departure for the inn at which we were to sleep. Being a lovely night, Coleman volunteered to accompany us for the sake of the walk, telling the servants not to sit up for him, as he had a latch-key in his pocket—an article, regarding the possession of which, a constant civil war was carried on between his mother and himself, wherein by dint of sundry well-contrived stratagems, and deeply-laid schemes, he invariably gained the victory.

"I tell you what," said Lawless, "the row and bother, and the whole kick-up altogether, has made me alarmingly hungry; the only decent bit of chicken I managed to lay hands on at supper, Di Clapperton ate: precious twist that girl has, to be sure; even after all the ground she's been over to-night, going a topping pace the whole time too, she wasn't a bit off her feed; didn't she walk into the ham sandwiches—that's all! I'd rather keep her for a week than a fortnight, I can tell you; she'd eat her head off in a month, and no mistake. Here, waiter," he continued, "have you got anything to eat in the house?"

"Yes, sir, splendid barrel of oysters down by coach last night; capital brown stout, sir—real Guinnes's!"

"That's it, my man," was the rejoinder; "trot 'em out, by all means. Freddy, old boy," he continued, "come along in with us, and have some."

"Well, I don't mind astonishing the natives for once in a way," replied Freddy; "but it's dreadfully debauched, eating oysters and drinking porter at this time of day or night, whichever you are pleased to call it· you'll ruin my morals."

"The devil fly away with your morals, and he wont be overloaded either," was the polite rejoinder; and in we all went together. The oysters and porter soon made their appearance, and had ample justice done them; then, as a matter of course, spirits and water

and cigars were produced, "just to prevent the oysters from disagreeing with us;" and we sat talking over old times, and relating various adventures which had occurred to us since, without troubling our heads about the flight of minutes. At length Coleman, pulling out his watch, exclaimed, "Past four o'clock, by the powers! I must be getting to bed,—I've got a lease to draw to-morrow, and my head won't be over-clear, as it is."

"Nonsense," replied Lawless; "bed's all a popular delusion: we can't be better off than we are—sit still." But on Coleman's persisting in his wish to depart, Lawless continued,—"Well, take another glass, and then Frank and I will walk home with you, and see you safe, for it's my belief that you're getting 'screwed,' or you'd never think of going to bed." Freddy and I exchanged glances, for if any of our party were in the condition expressed by the mysterious word 'screwed', it certainly was Lawless himself. After sitting some little time longer, we once more sallied forth, with the avowed intention of seeing Coleman home.

CHAPTER XV.

RINGING THE CURFEW

"If the bell have any sides the clapper will find 'em."—*Ben Jonson.*

"—— ringing changes all our bells hath marr'd,
Jangled they have and jarr'd
So long, they're out of tune, and out of frame;
They seem not now the same.
Put them in frame anew, and once begin
To tune them so, that they may chime all in."—*Herbert.*

"Great then are the mysteries of bell-ringing: and this may be said in its praise, that of all devices which men have sought out for obtaining distinction by making a noise in the world, it is the most harmless."—*The Doctor.*

As we proceeded through the town, Lawless, despite our endeavours to restrain him, chose to vent his superabundant spirits by performing sundry feats at the expense of the public, which, had the police regulations of the place been properly attended to, would have assuredly gained us a sojourn in the watch-house. We had just prevailed upon him to move on, after singing "We won't go home till morning" under the windows of "the Misses Properprim's Seminary for Young Ladies," when a little shrivelled old man, in a sort of watchman's white great-coat, bearing a horn lantern in his hand, brushed past us, and preceded us down the street at a shuffling trot.

"Holloa!" cried Lawless, "who's that old picture of ugliness? Look what a pace the beggar's cutting along at; what on earth's he up to?"

"That's the sexton and bell-ringer," returned Coleman; "they keep up the old custom at Hillingford of ringing the curfew at daybreak, and he's going about it now, I suppose."

"What jolly fun!" said Lawless, "come on, and let's see how the old cock does it;" and, suiting the action to the word, off he started in pursuit.

"We'd better follow him," said I; "he'll be getting into some mischief or other, depend upon it."

After running a short distance down the street, on turning a

corner, we found Lawless standing under a small arched door-way leading into a curious old battlemented tower, which did not form part of any church or other building of the same date as itself, but stood alone, showing, as it reared its time-worn head high above the more modern dwellings of which the street was composed, like some giant relic of the days of old. This tower contained a peal of bells, the fame of which was great in that part of the country, and of which the townspeople were justly proud.

"All right!" cried Lawless, "the old scare-crow ran in here like a lamp-lighter, as soon as he saw me bowling after him, and has left the key in the lock; so I shall take the liberty of exploring a little; I've a strong though undeveloped taste for architectural antiquities. Twopence more, and up goes the donkey! come along!"

So saying, he flung open the door, and disappeared up some steps leading to the interior of the tower, and, after a moment's hesitation, Coleman and I followed him.

"Don't be alarmed, old boy!" observed Lawless, patting the sexton (who looked frightened out of his wits at our intrusion) so forcibly on the back, as to set him coughing violently, "we're not come to murder you for the sake of your lantern."

"This gentleman," said Coleman, who by the cunning twinkle of his eye was evidently becoming possessed by the spirit of mischief, "has been sent down by the Venerable Society of Antiquaries, to ascertain whether the old custom of ringing the Curfew is properly performed here. He is, in fact, no other than the Noble President of the Society himself. That gentleman (pointing to me) is the Vice-President, and I, who have the honour of addressing you, am the unworthy Secretary."

"That's it, Daddy," resumed Lawless, coolly taking up the lantern, and lighting a cigar, "that's the precise state of the poll, I mean case; so now go to work, and mind you do the trick properly."

Thus adjured, the old man, who appeared completely bewildered by all that was going on, mechanically took hold of a rope, and began slowly and at stated intervals tolling one of the bells.

"Where are your assistants, my good man?" inquired Coleman after a short pause.—The only answer was a stare of vacant surprise, and Coleman continued, "Why, you don't mean to say you only ring *one* bell, to be sure? oh, this is all wrong;—what do you say, Mr. President?"

"Wrong?" replied Lawless, removing the cigar from his mouth, and puffing a cloud of smoke into the sexton's face, "I should just think it *was*, most particularly and confoundedly wrong. I'll tell you what it is, old death's-head and cross-bones; things can't be allowed to go on in this manner. Reform, sir, is wanting, 'the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill.' I mean to get into Parliament some day, Fairlegh, when I am tired of knocking about, you know—but that wasn't exactly what I was going to say."

"Suppose we show him the proper way to do it, Mr. President!" suggested Freddy, catching hold of the rope of one of the bells.

"Off she goes," cried Lawless, seizing another.

"Gentlemen, good gentlemen, don't ring the bells, pray," implored the old man, "you'll raise the whole town; they are never rung in that way without there's a fire, or a flood, or the riot act read, or something of that dreadful natur the matter."

But his expostulations were vain. Lawless had already begun ringing his bell in a manner which threatened to stun us all; and Coleman saying to me, "Come, Frank, we're regularly in for it, so you may as well take a rope and do the thing handsomely while we *are* about it; it would be horridly shabby of you to desert us now," I hastened to follow his example.

Now it must be known that when I arrived at the inn, before supper, owing probably to a combination of the fatigue of the day, the excitement of the evening, and the pain of my arm, I felt somewhat faint and exhausted, and should have greatly preferred going at once quietly to bed; but, as I was aware that by so doing I should break up the party, I resolved to keep up as well as I could, and say nothing about it. Finding myself refreshed by the bottled porter, I repeated the dose several times, and the remedy continuing to prove efficacious, without giving the thing a thought, I drank more deeply than was my wont, and was a good deal surprised, when I rose to accompany the others, to discover that my legs were slightly unsteady, and my head not so clear as usual. Still I had been far from approving the proceedings of my companions, and had any one told me, when I entered the tower, that I was going to ring all the good people of Hillingford out of their beds in a fright, I should indignantly have repelled the accusation. Now, however, owing to the way in which Coleman had requested my assistance, it appeared to my bewildered senses that I should be meanly deserting my friends the moment they had got into difficulties, if I were to refuse; but when he used the word "shabby," it settled the busi-

ness, and seizing a rope with my uninjured hand, I began pulling away vigorously.

"Now then, you wretched old beggar," shouted Lawless, "don't stand there winking and blinking like an owl; pull away like bricks, or I'll break your neck for you; go to work, I say!" and the miserable sexton, with a mute gesture of despair, resuming his occupation, a peal of four bells was soon ringing bravely out over hill and dale, and making 'night horrible' to the startled inhabitants of Hillingford.

After the lapse of a few minutes, a distant shout was heard; then a confused noise of people running and calling to each other in the streets reached our ears; and lastly the sound of several persons rapidly approaching the bell-tower became audible.

"We're in for a scrimmage now, I expect," said Lawless, leisurely turning up his sleeves.

"Not a bit of it," replied Freddy; "only leave it to me, and you'll see. All you fellows have got to do is to hold your tongues, and keep on ringing away till your arms ache; trust me to manage the thing all right. Lawless, keep your eye on ancient Methuselah there, and if he offers to say a word, just knock him head over heels by accident, will you?"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Lawless, shaking his fist significantly at the sexton.

At this moment a short fat man, with a very red face (who we afterwards learned was no less a person than the mayor of Hillingford in his public, and a mighty tallow-chandler in his private, capacity) appeared, attired in a night-cap and great-coat, and bearing the rest of his wardrobe under his arm, followed by several of the townspeople, all in a singular state of undress, and with the liveliest alarm depicted on their countenances. The worthy mayor was so much out of breath with his unwonted exertions, that some seconds elapsed before he could utter a word, and in the meantime we continued ringing as though our lives depended upon it. At length he contrived to gasp out a hurried inquiry (hardly audible amidst the clanging of the bells) as to what was the matter. To this Coleman replied by pointing with one hand to a kind of loop-hole, of which there were several for the purpose of supplying light and air to the interior of the tower, while with the other hand he continued ringing away more lustily than before.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Mayor, raising himself on tip-

toe, and stretching his short neck in a vain endeavour to peep through the loop-hole, "it must be a fire in West Street!"

Two or three of the bye-standers immediately rushed into the street, calling out "A fire in West Street! send for the engines."

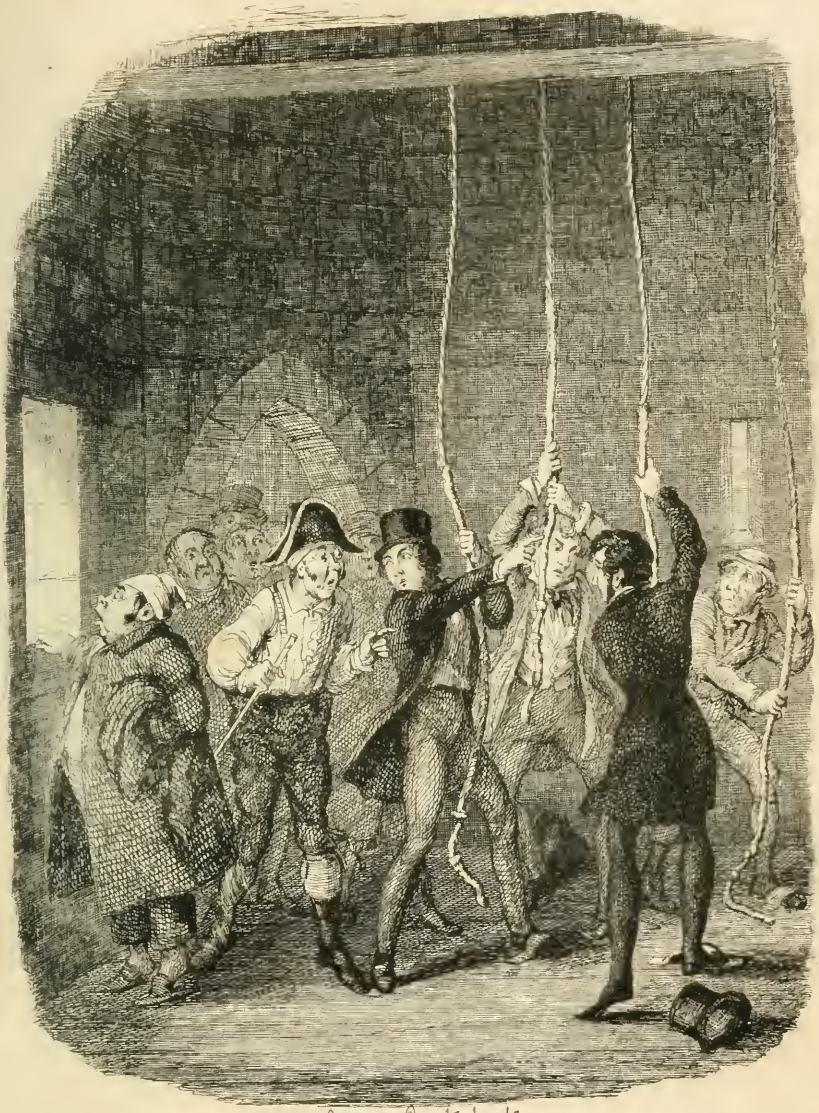
At this moment Freddy caught the eye of a tall gaunt-looking man in *a* top boot and plush breeches, but without coat or waistcoat, and wearing a gold-laced cocked hat on his head, hind part before, from beneath which peeped out a white cotton night-cap. Having succeeded in attracting the attention of this worthy, who in his proper person supported the dignity of Parish Beadle, Coleman repeated the same stratagem he had so successfully practised upon the Mayor, save that in this instance he pointed to a loop-hole in a completely opposite direction to the one he had indicated previously. The Beadle immediately ran out, muttering ere he did so, "I was certain sure as they was all wrong."—In another minute we heard him shouting, "It's in Middle Street, I tell you, there's a fire in Middle Street!"

Coleman now turned to the Mayor, who having somewhat recovered his breath, was evidently preparing to question the sexton as to the particulars of the affair, and exclaimed in a tone of deep feeling, "I am surprised to see a person of your high station standing idle at a moment like this! take a rope, sir, and lend a hand to assist us, if you be a man."

"To be sure, to be sure," was the reply, "any thing for the good of the town," and grasping an unoccupied rope, he began pulling away with all his might.

The hubbub and confusion now became something unparalleled,—people without number kept running in and out of the tower, giving and receiving all kinds of contradictory orders; volunteers had been found to assist us, and the whole peal of eight bells was clashing and clanging away above the tumult, and spreading the alarm farther and wider; men on horseback were arriving from the country, eager to render assistance; women were screaming, dogs barking, children crying; and, to crown the whole, a violent and angry debate was being carried on by the more influential members of the crowd, as to the quarter in which the supposed conflagration was raging,—one party loudly declaring it was in Middle Street, while the other as vehemently protested it was in West Street.

The confusion had apparently attained its highest pitch, and the noise was perfectly deafening, when suddenly a shout was raised,



"The engines! clear the way for the engines!" and in another moment the scampering of the crowd in all directions, the sound of horses' feet galloping, and the rattle of wheels, announced their approach. While all this was going on, Coleman had contrived silently and unperceived to substitute two of the by-standers in my place and his own, so that Lawless was now the only one of our party actually engaged in ringing. Seizing the moment therefore when the shout of "the Engines!" had attracted the attention of the loiterers, he touched him on the shoulder, saying, "Now's our time, come along," and joining a party who were going out, we reached the door of the bell-tower unobserved.

The scene which presente itself to our view, as we gained the open street, would require the pencil of a Wilkie, or the pen of a Dickens, to describe. The street widened in front of the bell-tower, so as to make a kind of square. In the centre of the space thus formed stood the fire-engine drawn by four post-horses, the post-boys sitting erect in their saddles, ready to dash forward the moment the fire-men (who in their green coats faced with red, and shining leather helmets, imparted a somewhat military character to the scene), should succeed in ascertaining the place at which their assistance was required. The crowd, which had opened to admit the passage of the engine, immediately closed round it again, in an apparently impenetrable phalanx, the individual members of which afforded as singular a variety of costume as can well be imagined, extending from the simple shirt of propriety, to the decorated uniforms of the fire-brigade. As every one who had an opinion to give was bawling it out at the very top of his voice, whilst those who had none, contented themselves by shouting vague sentences devoid of particular meaning of any kind, the noise and tumult were such as beggared description. There was one short stout red-faced little fellow, (for I succeeded in catching sight of him at last), with a mouth of such fearful dimensions, that when it was open, the upper half of his head appeared a mere lid, whose intellects being still partially under the dominion of sleep, evidently imagined himself at the Election, which had taken place a short time previously, and continued strenuously vociferating the name of his favourite candidate, though the cry of "Judkins for ever!" did not tend greatly to elucidate matters. Suddenly, and at the very height of the confusion, the bells ceased ringing, and for a moment, as if influenced by some supernatural power, the crowd to a man became silent.

The transition from the Babel of sounds I have been describing, to such perfect tranquillity was most striking, and impressed one with an involuntary feeling of awe. I was aroused by Coleman, who whispered in an under tone, "The Sexton has peached, depend upon it, and the sooner we're off the better."

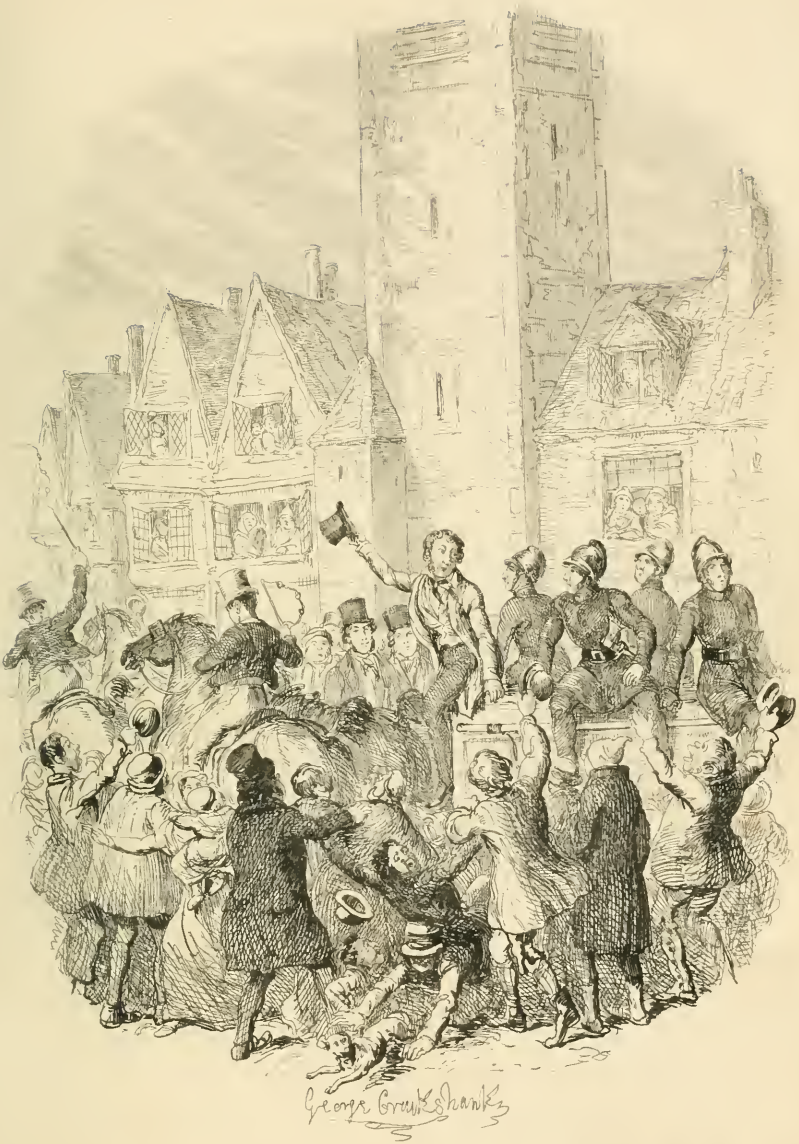
"Yes, and I'll go in style too; so good-bye, and take care of yourselves," exclaimed Lawless, and, springing forward, before any one was aware of his intention, he forced his way through the crowd, overturning sundry members thereof in his progress, until he reached the fire-engine, upon which he seated himself with a bound, shouting as he did so—"Forward, forward, do you want the place to be burnt to the ground? I'll show you the way; give 'em the spur; faster, faster, straight on till I tell you to turn —faster, I say!"

The appearance of authority, coupled with energy and decision, will usually control a crowd. The fire-men, completely taken in by Lawless's manner, reiterated his orders; the post-boys applied both whip and spur vigorously,—the horses dashed forward, and, amidst the enthusiastic cheering of the mob, the engine disappeared like a flash of lightning.

"Well, I give the Honourable George credit for that," exclaimed Coleman, as soon as we had a little recovered from our surprise at Lawless's elopement with the fire-engine; "it was a good idea, and he worked it out most artistically; the air with which he waved his hat to cheer them forward was quite melo-dramatic. I've seen the thing not half so well done by several of the greatest generals who ever lived,—gallant commanders, whom their men would have followed through any amount of the reddest possible fire during the whole of Astley's campaigns, that is, if the commissariat department (consisting of the pot-boy stationed at the side-scenes with the porter) did its duty efficiently."

"Freddy, they're beginning to come out from the bell-tower," interrupted I; "we shall be called upon to answer for our misdeeds, if we stay much longer; see, that long man in the cocked hat is coming towards us."

"So he is," returned Coleman; "it strikes me they've found us out; follow me, and try and look as if it wasn't you, as much as possible, will you?" So saying, he began to make his way out of the crowd unperceived, an example I hastened to follow; but we were not destined to effect our purpose quite so easily. The point Coleman wished to gain was an arched gateway leading into a sta-


George Cruikshank

ble-yard, from which he hoped, by a foot-path with which he was acquainted, across some fields, to reach without molestation the inn where I was to sleep. But, in order to effect this, we were obliged to pass the door of the bell-tower, from which several people, who appeared angry and excited, were now issuing. The foremost of these, the cocked-hatted official previously mentioned, made his way up to us, exclaiming as he did so,—

"Here, you young gen'lmen, just you stop a bit, will yer? His Wusshup, the Mayor, seems to begin to think as somebody's been a making a fool of him."

"A very natural idea," returned Coleman; "I only wonder it never occurred to him before; as far as my limited acquaintance with him will allow me to judge, the endeavour appears to have been perfectly successful. I wish you a very good morning."

"That's all wery fine, but I must trouble yer to come along o'me; his Wusshup wants to speak to yer," replied the Beadle, seizing Coleman by the coat-collar.

"That is a pleasure his 'Wusshup' must contrive to postpone till he has caught me," answered Freddy, as with a sudden jerk he succeeded in freeing himself from his captor's grasp, while, almost at the same moment, he dealt him a cuff on the side of the head, which sent him reeling back to the door of the bell-tower, where encountering the Mayor, who had just made his appearance, he came headlong to the ground, dragging that illustrious functionary down with him in a frantic endeavour to save himself. Profiting by the confusion that ensued, Freddy and I sprang forward, darted through the arch-way, and, making the best use of our legs, soon found ourselves in the open fields, and quite beyond the reach of pursuit.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROMAN FATHER.

"If a dream should come in now to make you afear'd,
With a wind-mill on his head, and bells at his beard;
Would you straight wear your spectacles here at your toes,
And your boots on your brows, and your spurs on your nose."—*Ben Jonson.*

"No —— he
"With more than Roman fortitude is [illegible]r
First at the board in this unhappy process
Against his last and only son."—*The Two Foscari.*

Dreams, ye strange mysterious visions of the soul! Ye wild and freakish gambolings of the spirit, freed from the incubus of matter, and unfettered by the control of reason, of what fantastic caprices are ye the originators—what carricatures of the various features of our waking life do ye not exhibit to us, ludicrous and distorted indeed, but still preserving through their most extravagant exaggerations, a wayward and grotesque likeness to the realities they shadow forth! And stranger even than your most strange vagaries, is the cool matter-of-fact way in which our sleeping senses calmly accept, and acquiesce in, the medley of impossible absurdities you offer to their notice. We conceive ourselves, for instance, proceeding along a green lane on horseback; the animal upon which we are mounted becomes suddenly, we know and care not how, a copper tea-kettle, and we ride quietly on without testifying, or even feeling, the least symptom of surprise, as though the identity of hackneys and tea-kettles was a fact generally recognised in natural history; the kettle perhaps addresses us, it converses with us on all the subjects which interest us most deeply; and we discuss our various hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, loves and hates, with no other sentiment, save a degree of pleasure at the very sensible and enlightened views which the utensil takes of the matter I might multiply examples, *ad infinitum*, to illustrate my meaning; but to those who are familiar with the phenomena alluded to, one instance will suffice; while those who have never experienced them, will probably, at all events, take refuge in disbelief, and lament themselves with a

self-satisfying sorrow over the fresh proof it adduces of the truth of the Israelitish Monarch's aphorism, that "all men are liars."

Be this as it may, my sleep (when, at length, after the excitement I had undergone, sleep condescended to visit me, which was not until, contrary to all the rules of good breeding, Somnus had allowed me to call upon him repeatedly in vain) was disturbed by all sorts and kinds of visions. Lawlesses innumerable, attended by shoals of top-booted shrimps,—the visionary shrimp being a sort of compromise between the boy so called, and the real article,—drove impossible dog-carts drawn by quadrupeds whose heads and necks bore a striking resemblance to the waltz-loving Diana Clapperton, up and down ball-rooms, to the unspeakable terror of squadrons of turbaned old ladies. Deafening peals of bells, rung by troops of Freddy Colemen (which I take to be the correct plural of Coleman) were rousing night-capped nations from their slumbers in alarm, to whom flocks of frightened mayors were bleating forth bewildered orders, which resulted in perplexing everybody; and through it all, mixed up and combined with everything, the pale interesting face of Clara Saville, characterized by an expression of the deepest sadness, gazed at me reproachfully out of its large trustful eyes, and rendered me intensely miserable. From dreams such as these, I was not sorry to be aroused by the sun shining brightly through my window-shutter; and, on consulting my watch, I found, somewhat to my surprise, that I had slept till nearly mid-day.

On reaching the breakfast-room my first inquiry was for Lawless, in reply to which I was informed, that he had returned (on the fire-engine) about half an hour after I came in; that immediately upon his arrival he had called for unlimited supplies of rum, lemons, and other suitable ingredients, wherewith he manufactured a monster brewing of punch in a washing-tub, for the benefit of the firemen, with whom he had somehow contrived to establish the most amicable relations; he then assisted in discussing the beverage he had prepared, which appeared to produce no particular effects, until, wishing to rise to return thanks when they drank his health, he suddenly lost his balance, and being carried to bed by the waiter and boots, had not yet re-appeared. Not liking to disturb him, I breakfasted alone, and then strolled out to look after Freddy. I found him sitting in the study, busily engaged in drawing the lease he had mentioned to us the night before. On seeing me, however, he sprang up, and shaking me by the hand, inquired how I was after our adventures.

"That's all right, so far," was his reply to my assurance that my injured arm was going on favourably, and that I felt no other ill effects of any kind. "I tell you what," he continued, "my governor's in no end of a rage about the bell-ringing affair: that old fool of a mayor recognised me it seems, and vows vengeance, threatening to do all sorts of things to me, and the governor swears he'll aid and abet him in anything he chooses to do. They had better take care what they are at, or they may find I'm not to be bullied with impunity; but come along into the drawing-room; I don't mind facing the elders now I've got you to support me; and really, what between my father's accusations, and my mother's excuses, it's as good as a play."

"You're abominably undutiful master Fred," replied I, as I turned to follow him.

On reaching the drawing-room we found Mr. Coleman standing with his arms folded with an air of dignified severity, so exactly in the centre of the hearth-rug, that he seemed to belong to the pattern. Seated in a low arm-chair on the right hand side of the fireplace was Mrs. Coleman, apparently absorbed in the manufacture of some mysterious article of knitting, which constantly required propitiating by the repetition of a short arithmetical puzzle, without which it would by no means allow itself to be created. At her feet, engaged in the Sisyphian labour of remedying the effects of "a great fall" in worsteds, scissors, and other "articles for the work-table," knelt Lucy Markham, looking so piquante and pretty, that I could not help wondering how my friend Freddy contrived to keep himself heart-whole, if, as I imagined, he was thrown constantly into her society. The party was completed by a large, sleek, scrupulously white, cat, clearly a privileged individual, who sat bolt upright in the chair opposite Mrs. Coleman, regarding the company with an air of intense self-satisfaction, and evidently considering the whole thing got up for her express delectation. Mr. Coleman received me with pompous civility, hoping I felt no ill effects from my exertions in the *earlier* part of the evening—taking care to lay a marked emphasis on the word earlier. Lucy acknowledged my presence by a smile, and a slight inclination of the head, but without altering her position. Worthy Mrs. Coleman, however, jumped up, and shook hands warmly with me, thereby providing Lucy with full employment for the next ten minutes in picking up the whole machinery of the knitting.

"Very glad indeed to see you, Mr. Lawless," commenced Mrs. Coleman.

"It's Fairlegh, mother," interposed Freddy.

"Yes, my dear, yes, I knew it was Mr. Fairlegh, only I'm always making a mistake about names; but I never forget a face I've once seen; and I'm sure I'm not likely to forget Mr. Fairlegh's after the noble way in which he behaved last night" (here Mr. Coleman turned away with a kind of ironical growl, and began caressing the cat). "I declare when I saw him setting Clara Saville's dress on fire, so nicely made as it was too——"

"My dear aunt," remonstrated Lucy, "it was Mr. Lawless who threw down the candelabrum, and set Clara's frock alight."

"Yes, my love, I know, I saw it all, my dear; and very kind it was of him, I mean afterwards, in speaking to me of it; he said he was so very sorry about it,—and he called it something funny, poor young man,—'no end of a something or other'——"

"Sell," suggested Freddy.

"Oh yes, that was it, no end of a sell. What did he mean by that, my dear?"

"I strongly disapprove," observed Mr. Coleman (who still continued stroking the cat as he spoke, which process he performed by passing his hand deliberately from her head, along her back, to the very tip of her tail, which he retained each time in his grasp for a moment, ere he recommenced operations), "I highly disapprove of the absurd practice, so common with young men of the present day, of expressing their ideas in that low and incomprehensible dialect, termed 'slang,' which, in my opinion, has neither wit nor refinement to redeem its vulgarity, and which effectually prevents their acquiring that easy yet dignified mode of expression, which should characterize the conversation of the true gentleman. In *my* younger days we took Burke for our model; the eloquence of Pitt and Fox gave the tone to society; and during our hours of relaxation, we emulated the polished wit of Sheridan: but it is a symptom of that fearful levelling system which is one of the most alarming features of the present age; instead of striving to raise and exalt——"

"Really, my dear Mr. Coleman, I beg your pardon for interrupting you," cried his wife, "but this is the second time you've lifted my poor little cat off her hind legs by her tail; and though she's as good as gold, and let's you do just what you like to her, it can't be pleasant for her, I'm sure."

The only reply to this, if reply it can be called, was an angry "Psha!" and, turning on his heel, Mr. Coleman strode with great dignity towards the window, though the effect was considerably marred by his stumbling against an ottoman which stood in the way, and hurting his shin to an extent which entailed rubbing, albeit a sublunary and un-Spartan operation, as a necessary consequence. A pause ensued, which at length became so awkward, that I was about to hazard some wretched commonplace or other, for the sake of breaking the silence, when Mrs. Coleman addressed me with—

"You'll take some luncheon, Mr. Lawless, I'm sure. Freddy, *ring the bell!*"

"He'll be ready enough to do that," growled Mr. Coleman; you could not have asked a fitter person."

"Of course he will, a dear fellow," replied Mrs. Coleman; "he's always ready to oblige anybody."

"I disapprove greatly of such extreme facility of disposition," observed Mr. Coleman; "it lays a young man open to every temptation that comes in his way; and for want of a proper degree of firmness and self-respect, he gets led into all kinds of follies and excesses."

"Now, my dear Mr. Coleman," returned his wife, "I cannot bear to hear you talk in that way; you are too hard upon poor Freddy and his young friends; I'm certain they meant no harm;—if they *did* ring the bells by way of a joke, I dare say they had drunk rather more champaigne than was prudent, and scarcely knew what they were about; and really all they seem to have done was to make people get up a little sooner than usual, and that is rather a good thing than otherwise, for I'm sure if you did but know the trouble I have sometimes in getting the maids out of bed in a morning,—and that lazy fine gentleman of a footman too, he's just as bad.—Why, what's the matter now?"

"I really am astonished at you, Mrs. Coleman," exclaimed her husband, walking hurriedly across the room,—although this time he took care to avoid the ottoman, "encouraging that boy of yours in such scandalous and ungentlemanly proceedings as those he was engaged in last night! No harm, indeed! I only hope (that is, I don't hope it at all, for he deserves to be punished, and I wish he may) that the laws of his country may think there's no harm in it. Mr Dullmug, the mayor, intends, very properly in my opinion, to appeal to those laws; and that is a thing, I am proud to say, no

Englishman ever does in vain. You may smile, sir," he continued, detecting Freddy in the act of telegraphing to me his dissent from the last doctrine propounded. "You may ridicule your old father's opinion, but you'll find it no laughing matter to clear yourself, and justify your conduct, in a court of justice. They may bring it in conspiracy, for I dare say you plotted it all beforehand; they may bring it in riot and illegal assembly, for there were three of you engaged in it; they may bring it in treason, for you incited his majesty's subjects to commit a breach of the peace, and interfered with the proper officers in the discharge of their duty: 'pon my word I don't know that they might not bring it in murder, for the poor child that had the measles in the town died between six and seven o'clock this morning, and no doubt the confusion had something to do with accelerating its death. So, sir, if you're not hanged, you're certain to be transported; and don't ask me to assist you; I've lived by supporting the law for fifty years, and I'm not going in my old age to lend my countenance to those who break it, and set it at nought, though my own son be one of them. I have spoken my mind plainly, Mr. Fairlegh, more so perhaps than I should have done before a guest in my own house, but it is a matter upon which I feel deeply. I wish you good morning sir." So saying, he turned away, and stalked majestically out of the room, closely followed, not to say imitated, by the cat, who held her tail erect, so as to form a right angle with the line of her back, and walked with a hypocritical air of meek dignity and chastened self-approval.

"That's what I call pleasant and satisfactory," exclaimed Freddy, after a pause, during which each member of the party exchanged glances of consternation with somebody else. "Who would ever have imagined the possibility of the governor's turning cantankerous—assuming the character of the Roman father upon the shortest possible notice, and thirsting to sacrifice his son on the altar of the outraged laws of his country! What an interesting victim I shall make to be sure! Lucy must lend me that wreath of roses she looked so pretty in last night, to wear at the fatal ceremony. And my dear mother shall stand near, tearing out those revered locks of hers by handfuls." (The reader should perhaps be informed that Mrs. Coleman rejoiced in a false front of so open and ingenuous a nature, that from its youth upwards it never could have been guilty of deceiving any one.) "May I ring and tell John to have all the carving knives sharpened? it would be more satisfactory to my feelings not to be slaughtered with a blunt weapon."

"Don't talk in that horrid way, Frederic," cried Mrs. Coleman, "I'm sure your father would never think of doing such dreadful things; but I believe you're only making fun of him, which isn't at all right of you. I'm not a bit surprised at his being angry with you, when you know how steady he always says he was as a young man (not that I ever quite believe it though); *he* never went ringing bells, however late he might stay out at night, that I heard of (though I should never have known it if he had, very likely). I don't myself see any great harm in it, you know, Mr. Fairless, particularly after your saving poor Clara Saville, and Freddy from drowning, when you were all boys together—indeed I shall always have the highest opinion of you for it, only I wish you had never done it at all, either of you, because of making your father so angry, you I mean, Frederic."

"Have you received any account of Miss Saville this morning?" inquired I, anxious to change the conversation; for I could see that Freddy, despite his assumed indifference, was a good deal annoyed at the serious light in which the old gentleman seemed to look upon our *escapade*. "I should be glad to know that she was none the worse for all the alarm she must have suffered."

"No, we have not heard anything of her," replied Lucy. "Should we not send to inquire after her, aunt?"

"Certainly, my dear Lucy; I am glad you have reminded me; I always meant to send, only all this has put it out of my head."

"Now, Frank, there's a splendid chance for you," exclaimed Freddy; "nothing can be more correct than for you to call and make the proper inquiries in person; and then if old Stiff-back should happen not to be at home, and you can contrive to get let in, and the young lady be not actually a stone——"

"Indeed, Frederic, she is nothing of the kind," interrupted Lucy, warmly; "if you only knew her, you would be astonished to find what deep warm feelings are concealed beneath that calm manner of hers; but she has wonderful self-control. I could see last night how much she was grieved at being obliged to go away without having thanked Mr. Fairlegh for saving her."

"Give her a chance to repair the error to-day, by all means, then," said Freddy; "and if you should succeed in gaining an interview, and she really is anxious to do a little bit of the grateful, and old Vernor does not kick you down stairs, I shall begin to regret that I didn't extinguish her myself."

"I really have a great mind to follow your advice," returned I;

"it is only proper to inquire after the young lady, and they need not let me in unless they like."

"If you should see her, Mr. Lawlegh," said Mrs. Coleman, "tell her from me, how very much vexed I was about the candelabrum being thrown down and setting fire to her dress; it was made of the very best Dresden China, and must have cost (only it was a present, which made it all the more valuable you know) fifteen or sixteen guineas; and I'm sure I wonder, now I come to think of it, why it did not flare up and burn her to death; but you were so quick and clever, and entirely spoilt that beautiful whittle of old Mrs. Trottles, with the greatest presence of mind; and I'm sure we ought all to be thankful to you for it; and we shall be delighted to see her when she has quite recovered it, tell her, particularly Lucy, who is nearest her own age, you know."

"Let me see," said Freddy, musing; "Mrs. Trottles must be seventy-two if she is a day; 'pon my word, Lucy, you're the youngest-looking woman of your age I ever met with; if I had not heard my mother say it myself, I'd never have believed it."

"Believed what, Freddy? What have I said?" asked Mrs. Coleman.

"That Lucy was Mrs. Trottles' most intimate friend, because she was nearest her own age," returned Freddy.

"No such thing, sir; I said, or I meant to say,—only you are so tiresome with your jokes, that you puzzle one,—that Lucy being her own age, I mean Clara's, Mr. Fairless was to tell her how very glad she would be—and very natural it is for young people to like young people—to see her; and I hope you'll remember to tell her all I have said exactly, Mr. Fairless, for I'm always anxious to try to please and amuse her, she's so very dull and stupid, poor thing!"

To perform this utter impossibility I faithfully pledged myself; and taking a hasty farewell of the ladies, hurried out of the room to conceal a fit of laughter, which had been gradually becoming irrepressible.

"Laugh away, old boy," cried Freddy, who had accompanied me into the hall; "no wonder I'm an odd fellow, for, as Pat would say, my mother was one before me, and no mistake. I wish you luck with the fair Clara,—not that you'll see her,—old Vernor will take care of that somehow or other; even if he's not at home, he'll have locked her up safely before he went out, depend upon it."

"You do not mean that in sober earnest?" said I.

"Perhaps not actually in fact," replied Freddy, "but in effect I believe he does. Clara tells Lucy she never sees any one."

"She shall see me to-day, if I can possibly contrive it," said I. "Oh, for the good old days of chivalry, when knocking the guardian on the head, and running away with the imprisoned damsel afterwards, would have been accounted a very moral and gentlemanlike way of spending the morning!"

"Certainly, they had a pleasant knack of simplifying matters, those 'knights of old,'" replied Freddy; "but it's not a line of business that would have suited me at all; in balancing their accounts, the kicks always appear to have obtained a very uncomfortable preponderance over the halfpence; besides, the *causa belli* was a point on which their ideas were generally in a deplorable state of confusion: when one kills a man, it's as well to have some slight notion *why* one does it; and the case comes home to one still more closely, if it's somebody else who's going to kill you."

"You're about right there, master Freddy," said I, smiling as I shook hands with him, and quitted the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INVISIBLE GIRL.

Aye, that's a dolt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse.—*Merchant of Venice.*

Yond young fellow swears he will speak with you. What's to be said to him? He's fortified against any denial.—*Twelfth Night.*

Be subject to no sight but mine; invisible
To every eyeball else.—*Tempest.*

On arriving at the inn, to which I was forced to return to order my horse, I perceived Lawless's tandem waiting at the door, surrounded by a crowd of admiring rusties, with Shrimp, his arms folded with an air of nonchalant defiance, which seemed to say, "Oh! run over me by all means if you choose," stationed directly in front of the leader's head. On entering the parlour, I found Lawless busily engaged in pulling on a pair of refractory boots, and looking very hot and red in the face from the exertion.

"How are you, Fairlegh? how are you? That stupid fool has made 'em too tight for anybody but Tom Thumb, and be hanged to him. Ever read fairy tales, Fairlegh? I did when I was a little shaver, and wore cock-tailed petticoats—all bare legs and bustle—'a Highland lad my love was born;' that style of thing, rather, you know; never believed 'em, though: wasn't to be done even then; eh? Well, this is a puzzler; I can't get 'em on. Where's the fellow they call Boots? Here, you sir, come and see if you can pull on these confounded namesakes of yours, and I'll tip you half-a-crown if you succeed; cheaper than breaking one's back, eh!"

"Where are you off to, supposing you should ever get those boots on?" asked I.

"Eh? I am going to call on the young woman I set alight at the hop last night, and tell her I'm quite down in the mouth about it; explain that I didn't go to do it; that it was quite a mistake, and all owing to the other young woman's being so fresh, in fact; and then offer to rig her out again, start her in new harness from bridle to crupper, all at my own expense, and that will be finishing off the affair handsomely, won't it?"

"I should advise your leaving out that last piece of munificence," replied I, "she might think it an insult."

"An insult, eh? Oh, if she's so proud as all that comes to, I'd better stay away altogether; I shall be safe to put my foot into it there, a good deal faster than I have into these villainous boots—that's it, Sampson, another pull such as that, and the deed's done," added Lawless, patting the human Boots on the back encouragingly.

"I was just going to ride over to inquire after Miss Saville myself," said I.

"That's the very thing then," was the reply. "I'll drive you there instead; it will be better for your scorched fin (pointing to my injured arm), than jolting about outside a horse, and you shall tell me what to say as we go along; you seem to understand the sex, as they call the petticoats, better than I do, and can put a fellow up to a few of the right dodges. I only wish they were all horses, and then I flatter myself I should not require any man's advice how to harness, drive, train, or physic them."

"The ladies are infinitely indebted to you," replied I, as I ran up stairs to prepare for our expedition.

A drive of rather less than an hour and a half, during which the thorough-breds performed in a way to delight every lover of horse-flesh, brought us to the park gate of Barstone Priory, where Mr. Vernor resided. After winding in and out for some half-mile amongst groups of magnificent forest-trees, their trunks partially concealed by plantations of rare and beautiful shrubs, a sudden turn of the road brought us in front of the priory—an ancient, venerable-looking pile of building, which had evidently, as its name implied, once belonged to some religious community. The alterations it had undergone, in order to adapt it to its present purpose, had been carried out with more taste and skill than are usually met with in such cases. The garden, with its straight terrace-walks, and brilliant flower-beds, contrasted well with the grey stone of which the building was composed, while the smooth-shaven lawn, with an old quaintly carved sun-dial in the centre, and above all, the absence of any living creature whatsoever, imparted an air of severe formality to the scene, which, as the eye rested upon it, seemed to realize all one had read of monastic discipline and seclusion; and one half expected to see a train of dark-veiled nuns, or sandalled friars, winding slowly forth from the hall-door.

"What a singular old shop!" exclaimed my companion, regarding the structure with a look of displeased criticism; "wretched

little windows, as ever I saw; they must be all in the dark inside on a dull day, and every day would be dull if one lived there, I should think. It would puzzle a fellow to tell whether that building was clerical or lay, fish or flesh; a castle that had taken a serious turn, or a church out for the day in plain clothes; how people can like to live in such a mouldy, rusty, musty old barn, that looks as full of ghosts as a cheese is of mites, I can't conceive."

"There certainly is an appearance of gloom and loneliness about the place," replied I; "but I think it is chiefly owing to the absence of any living object—a herd of deer in the park, a group of children and dogs playing on the lawn—anything to give animation to the picture, would be the greatest improvement."

"I should just think it would," returned Lawless. "Fancy a pack of hounds under that jolly old oak yonder, the huntsman and whips in their bits of pink, and a field of about fifty of the right sort of fellows on thorough-breds, dwadling about, talking to one another, or taking a canter over the turf, just to settle themselves in the saddle; that would be a sight to make old Vernor look a little better pleased than he did last night, sing out for his boots and buckskins, and clap his leg over the first four-footed beast that came in his way, even if it should happen to be the old cow."

"I hope I may be there to see if he does," replied I, laughing.

On inquiring whether Mr. Vernor was at home, we were answered in the affirmative by a tall gaunt-looking man-servant, with a stern, not to say surly, countenance, the expression of which was in some degree contradicted by a pair of quick restless little grey eyes, which in any other face one should have said twinkled merrily beneath the large grizzled eyebrows which o'ershadowed them.

Having, at Lawless's request, procured a nondescript hobbledehoy, of indefinite character, to stand at the horses' heads (we had left Shrimp behind, by common consent, that he might be no restraint on our conversation), he conducted us across the hall into a kind of morning room, fitted up with oak panels, and with a very handsome old carved oak chimney-piece reaching half-way to the ceiling. He was leaving the room to inform his master of our arrival, when Lawless stopped him by saying,—

"Here, just wait a bit; tell the young woman—that is to say, don't tell her anything; but I mean, let Miss Saville be made aware (I see you're awake, for all your long face), put her up to our being here; don't you know, eh?"

"Tip him," whispered I.

"Eh, stop a bit; you're a very honest fellow, and it's right to reward faithful servants; and—you understand all about it, eh?"

One portion of this somewhat incoherent address he did understand, evidently, for without altering a muscle of his face, he put out his hand, took the money, and left the room with the same unconscious air of imperturbability which he had maintained throughout the whole conference.

"Good move that, eh?" exclaimed Lawless, as soon as the door was closed; "that'll fetch her out of her hole, for a guinea. Mind, I shall do my best to cut you out, Master Frank. I don't see why I haven't a right to quite as large a share of her gratitude as you have, for if I hadn't set her on fire, you'd never have put her out; so, in fact, she owes it all to me—don't you see?"

"I'm afraid there's a little sophistry in that argument," replied I; "but we had better wait till we find whether we shall have the opportunity afforded us of trying our powers of fascination, before we quarrel about the effects to be produced by them. I cannot say I feel over sanguine as to the success of your somewhat original negotiation with that raw-boned giant in the blue plush *sine quâ nons*, as Coleman calls them."

"Time will show," rejoined Lawless, turning towards the door, which opened at this moment to admit Mr. Vernor; and, alas! him only.

His reception of us, though perfectly easy and well-bred, was anything but agreeable or encouraging. He answered our inquiries after Miss Saville's health, by informing us, cursorily, that no ill effects had ensued from her alarm of the previous evening. He received Lawless's apologies with a calm half-ironical smile, and an assurance that they were not required; and he slightly thanked me for my obliging assistance in words perfectly unexceptionable in themselves, but which, from a peculiarity in the tone of voice more than anything else, impressed one with a sense of insult rather than of compliment. Still, in compliance with certain expressive looks from Lawless, who evidently was most unwilling to be convinced of the failure of his little bit of diplomacy, I used every means I could think of to prolong the visit. I first admired, then criticised, the carving of the chimney-piece; I dived into a book of prints which lay upon the table, and prosed about mezzo-tint and line engraving, and bored myself, and of course my hearers also, till our powers of endurance were taxed almost beyond their strength; and, at last, having completely exhausted not only my small-talk, but my

entire stock of conversation of all sorts and sizes, I was regularly beaten to a stand-still, and obliged to take refuge in alternately teazing and caressing a beautiful black and tan setter, which seemed the only member of the party thoroughly sociable, and at his ease.

At length it became apparent even to Lawless himself, that the visit could not be protracted longer, and we accordingly rose and took our leave, our host (I will not call him entertainer, for it would be a complete misnomer) preserving the same tone of cool and imperturbable politeness to the very last. On reaching the hall, we encountered the surly old footman, whose features looked more than ever as if they had been carved out of some very hard species of wood.

"I say, old boy, where's the young lady, eh?" exclaimed Lawless, as soon as he caught sight of him; "she never showed so much as the tip of her nose in the room; how was that, eh?"

"If she com'd into the room when gentlemen was calling, master would eat her without salt," was the reply.

"Which fact you were perfectly aware of when you took my tip so quietly just now?"

"In course I was, why should I not be?"

"Done brown for once, by Jove!" muttered Lawless, as he left the hall—"a raw-boned old rogue, I'll be even with him some day, though——, we shall see, eh!"

While Lawless was busily engaged in settling some of the harness which had become disarranged, the old footman came up to me and whispered, "Make use of your eyes as you drive through the park, and mayhap you'll spy some *game worth looking after*, young gentleman."

Surprised at this unexpected address, I turned to question him as to its meaning, but in vain; for no sooner had he finished speaking, than he re-entered the hall, and shut the door behind him.

What could he intend me to understand, thought I; he evidently wished to imply something beyond the simple meaning of the words "game worth looking after;" could he mean to——no! the thing is impossible,—"absurd!" exclaimed I, as a wild idea shot through my brain, and I felt myself colour like a girl.

"What's absurd?" exclaimed Lawless, gathering up the reins as he spoke; "what are you talking about? why, you're ranting and staring about you like a play-actor; what's the matter with you, eh, Frank?"

"Nothing," replied I, taking my seat; "don't drive too fast through the park, I want to look at the view as we go along."

In obedience to the gaunt domestic's mysterious injunction, I made the best use of my eyes as we retraced our way through the park, and for my pains had the satisfaction of beholding a solitary rabbit, half hidden under a dock-leaf, and sundry carrion crows.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE GAME IN BARSTONE PARK.

"The fringed curtains of thine eye advance and say what thou see'st yond."—*Tempest.*

"Accost, Sir Andrew, accost."—*Twelfth Night.*

"Let us go thank him and encourage him.
My *Guardian's* rough and envious disposition
Strikes me at heart—Sir you have well deserved."—*As You Like It.*

We had arrived within a quarter of a mile of the gate; and I had just settled, to my thorough dissatisfaction, that the old footman must be a humourist, and had diverted himself by making a kind of April-fool out of season of me, when, through the trees, which at that spot stretched their huge branches across the road so as to form a complete arch, I fancied I perceived the flutter of a woman's dress; and, in another moment, a turn in the drive disclosed to my view a female form, which I instantly recognised as that of Clara Saville.

Without a minute's hesitation, I sprang to the ground before Lawless had time to pull up, and, saying to him, "I shall be back again directly;—wait for me—there's a good fellow," I hastily entered a winding path, which led through the trees to the spot where I had seen the young lady, leaving my companion mute from astonishment. Up to this moment, acting solely from a sort of instinctive impulse, which made me wish to see and speak to Miss Saville, I had never considered the light in which my proceedings might appear to her. What right, I now asked myself, had I to intrude upon her privacy, and, as it were, force my company upon her, whether she wished it or not? Might she not look upon it as an impertinent intrusion? As these thoughts flitted through my brain, I slackened my pace; and, had it not been for very shame, could have found in my heart to turn back again. This, however, I resolved not to do; having committed myself so far, I determined to give her an opportunity of seeing me, and, if she should show any intention of avoiding me, it would then be time enough to retrace my steps, and leave her unmolested. With this design I pro-

ceeded slowly up the path, stopping now and then as if to admire the view, until a turn of the walk brought me in sight of a rustic bench, on which was seated the young lady I had before observed. As soon as she perceived me, she rose and turned towards me, disclosing, as she did so, the graceful form and lovely features of my partner of the preceding evening. The morning costume, including a most irresistible little cottage-bonnet lined with pink, was even more becoming to her than the ball-dress; and when, instead of the cold air of constraint which had characterised her manner of the previous evening, she advanced to meet me with a slight blush and the most bewitching smile of welcome that ever set man's heart beating, I thought I had never seen anything so perfectly beautiful before.

"I must ask your forgiveness for venturing thus to intrude upon you, Miss Saville, "began I, after we had exchanged salutations; "but the temptation of learning from your own lips that you had sustained no injury, was too strong to be resisted, more particularly after the disappointment of finding you were from home, when I did myself the pleasure of calling on Mr. Vernor to inquire after you."

"Nay, there is nothing to forgive," replied Miss Saville; "on the contrary," she continued, blushing slightly, "I was anxious to see you, in order to thank you for the eminent service you rendered me yesterday evening."

"Really, it is not worth mentioning," returned I; "it is only what any other gentleman in the room would have done had he been in my situation; it was good Mrs. Trottle's shawl saved you; I could have done nothing without that."

"You shall not cheat me out of my gratitude in that way," replied she, smiling; "the shawl would have been of little avail, had it not been so promptly and energetically applied; and, as for the other gentlemen, they certainly were very ready with their offers of assistance *after* the danger was over. I am afraid," she continued, looking down, "you must have repented the trouble you had taken, when you found what a thankless person you had exerted yourself to save."

"Indeed, no such idea crossed my mind for an instant; the slight service I was able to render you was quite repaid by the pleasure of knowing that I had been fortunate enough to prevent you from sustaining injury," said I.

"You are very kind," was the reply; "but I can assure you I

have been exceedingly annoyed by imagining how wholly destitute of gratitude you must have considered me!"

"Lucy Markham told me such would be the case," replied I, smiling.

"Did she?—a dear warm-hearted girl,—she always does me justice!" exclaimed Miss Saville, as she raised her beautiful eyes, sparkling with animation, to my face. She then, for the first time, observed my injured arm, and added quickly, "but you wear your arm in a sling; I hope—that is—I am afraid—I trust it was not injured last night!"

"It is a mere trifle," replied I; "the wristband of my sleeve caught fire, and burnt my arm, but it is nothing of any consequence, I can assure you."

"I am sure you must have thought me sadly ungrateful," returned my companion; "you exerted yourself, and successfully, to save my life, receiving a painful injury in so doing, whilst I left the house without offering you the thanks due even to the commonest service imaginable."

"You were not then aware that I had burnt my arm, remember; and forgive me for adding," returned I, (for I saw that she was really distressed at the idea of my considering her wanting in gratitude,) "that it did not require any unusual degree of penetration to perceive that you were not altogether a free agent."

"No, indeed," replied she, eagerly catching at the idea, "Mr. Vernor, my guardian,—he always means to be very kind I am sure; but," she added, sinking her voice, "he is so very particular, and he speaks so sternly sometimes, that—I know it is very silly,—but I cannot help feeling afraid of him. I mention this, sir, to prevent your judging me too harshly, and I trust to your generosity not to take any unfair advantage of my openness; and now," she added, fixing her large eyes upon me with an imploring look which would have melted the toughest old anchorite that ever chewed grey peas, "you will not think me so very ungrateful, will you?"

"My dear Miss Saville," replied I, "let me beg you to believe I never dreamt of blaming you for a moment; on the contrary, I pay you no compliment, but only mention the simple truth, when I tell you that I admired your behaviour throughout the whole affair exceedingly; your presence of mind and self-control were greater than, under the circumstances, I could have supposed possible." As she made no reply to this, but remained looking stedfastly on the ground, with her head turned so as to conceal

her face, I continued—"I hope it is unnecessary for me to add, that you need not entertain the slightest fear of my making any indiscreet use of the frankness with which you have done me the honour of speaking to me—but I am forgetting half my business," added I, wishing to set her at ease again, "I am charged with all sorts of kind messages to you from good Mrs. Coleman and Miss Markham; I presume you would wish me to tell them I have had the pleasure of ascertaining that you have sustained no ill effects from your alarm."

"Oh yes, by all means," replied Miss Saville, looking up with a pleased expression, "give my kind love to them both, and tell dear Lucy I shall come over to see her as soon as ever I can."

"I will not intrude upon you longer, then, having delivered my message," said I; "I have kept my companion, the gentleman who was so unfortunate as to overturn the candelabrum, waiting an unconscionable time already; he is very penitent for his offence; may I venture to relieve his mind by telling him that you forgive him?"

"Pray do so," was the reply; "I never bear malice; besides, it was entirely an accident, you know. How thoroughly wretched he seemed when he found what he had done; frightened as I was, I could scarcely help laughing when I caught a glimpse of his face, he looked so delightfully miserable," added she, with a merry laugh. After a moment's pause, she continued—"I'm afraid Mr. Vernor will think I am lost, if he should happen to inquire after me, and I'm not forthcoming."

"Surely," said I, "he can never be so unreasonable as to blame you for such a trifle as remaining five minutes too long. Does he expect you to be a nun because he lives in a priory?"

"Almost, I really think," was the reply; "and now, good bye, Mr. Fairlegh," she continued—"I shall feel happier since I have been able to explain to you that I am not quite a monster of ingratitude."

"If that is the case, I am bound to rejoice in it also," answered I, "though I would fain convince you that the explanation was not required."

Her only reply to this was an incredulous shake of the head; and, once more wishing me good morning, she tripped along the path; and, when I turned to look again, her graceful figure had disappeared among the trees.

With a flushed brow and beating heart, (gentle reader, I was barely twenty,) I hastened to rejoin my companion, who, as might

be expected, was not in the most amiable humour imaginable, having had to restrain the impatience of two fiery horses for a space of time nearly approaching a quarter of an hour.

"Really, Lawless," I began, "I am quite ashamed."

"Oh, you are, are you?" was the rejoinder. "I should rather think you ought to be, too. But it's always the way with you fellows who pretend to be steady and moral, and all that sort of thing: when you do find a chance of getting into mischief, you're worse a great deal than a man like myself, for instance, who, without being bothered with any particular principles of any kind, has what I call a general sense of fitness and propriety, and does his dissipation sensibly and correctly. But to go tearing off like a lunatic after the first petticoat you see fluttering among the bushes in a gentleman's park, and leaving your friend to hold in two thorough-bred peppery devils, that are enough to pull a man's arms off, for above a quarter of an hour, it's too bad a great deal. Why, just before you came, I fully expected when that mare was plunging about on her hind legs——"

"How lovely she looked!" interrupted I, thinking aloud.

"You thought so, did you?" rejoined Lawless; "I wish you'd just had to hold her; her mouth's as hard——"

"Her mouth is perfect," replied I, emphatically; "quite perfect."

"Well, that's cool," muttered Lawless; "he'll put me in a passion directly;—pray, sir, may I ask how on earth you come to know anything about her mouth?"

"How do I know anything about her mouth!" exclaimed I. "Did I not watch with delight its ever-varying expression?—mark each movement of those beautiful lips, and drink in every syllable that fell from them?—not observe her mouth! Think you, when we have been conversing together for the last quarter of an hour, that I could fail to do so?"

"Oh, he's gone stark staring mad!" exclaimed Lawless; "strait-waistcoats, Bedlam, and all that sort o'thing, you know; —conversing with my bay mare for the last quarter of an hour, and drinking in every syllable that fell from her beautiful lips—oh, he's raving!"

"What do you mean?" said I, at length awaking to some consciousness of sublunary affairs—"Your mare!—who ever thought of your mare? it's Miss Saville I'm talking about."

"Miss Saville!" repeated Lawless; giving vent to a long whistle,

expressive of incredulity; "why, you don't mean to say you've been talking to Miss Saville all this time, do you?"

"To be sure I have," replied I; "and a very interesting and agreeable conversation it was too."

"Well," exclaimed Lawless, after a short pause; "all the luck in this matter seems to fall to your share; so the sooner I get out of it the better. It won't break my heart, that's one comfort;—if the young woman has the bad taste to prefer you to me, why, it can't be helped, you know;—but what did she say for herself, eh?"

"She sent you her forgiveness, for one thing," replied I; and I then proceeded to relate such particulars of the interview as I considered expedient; which recital, and our remarks thereupon, furnished conversation during the remainder of our drive.

CHAPTER XIX.

TURNING THE TABLES.

"'You should also make no noise in the streets.'
'You may stay him.'
'Nay, by'r lady, that I think he cannot.'
'Five shillings to one on't with any man that knows the statutes, he may stay him. His wits are not so blunt as, God help, I would desire they were. It is an offence to stay a man *against his will*. Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! but, masters, remember that I am an ass: though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass.'"— *Much Ado About Nothing.*

About a week had elapsed after the events which I have just recorded, when one morning, shortly before my return to Cambridge, I received a letter from Coleman, detailing the finale of the bell-ringing affair. It ran as follows :—

My Dear Frank,—Doubtless you are, or ought to be, very anxious to hear how I contrived to get out of the scrape into which you and the Honourable George managed to inveigle me, having previously availed yourselves of my innocence, and succeeded, through the seductive medium of oysters and porter, in corrupting my morals, then leaving me, poor victim! to bear the blame, and suffer the consequences, of our common misdemeanor. However, mine is no pitiful spirit to be quelled by misfortune, and, as dangers thickened around me, I bore up against them bravely, like —like—(was it Julius Cæsar or Coriolanus who did that sort of thing?) but never mind—like *a* Roman brick, we'll say; the particular brick is quite immaterial, but I must beg you to believe the likeness was something striking. To descend to particulars.—Hostilities were commenced by that old ass, Mayor Dullmug, who took out a summons against me for creating a riot and disturbance in the town, and, the first day the bench sat, I was marched off by two policemen, and locked up in a little dirty room, to keep cool till their worships were ready to discuss me. Well, there I sat, kicking my heels, and chuckling over a heart-rending little scene I had just gone through with my mother, whose dread of the terrors of the law was greatly increased by the very vague ideas she possessed of the extent of its powers. The punishment she had settled in her

own mind as likely to be awarded me was transportation, and her farewell address was as follows :—"If they should be cruel enough to order you to be transported for fourteen years, Freddy, my dear, I shall try to persuade your father (though he's just like a savage North American Indian about you) to get it changed 'for life' instead, for they always die of the yellow fever for the sharks to eat them, when they've been over there three or four years; and four years are better than fourteen, though bad's the best, and I'm a miserable woman. I read all about it last week in one of Captain Marryatt's books, and very shocking I thought it."—Having ventured to hint that, if I was carried off by the yellow fever at the end of a year or two, the length of my sentence would not signify much to me when I was dead, I was rebuked with, "Don't talk in that shocking way, Frederick, as if you were a heathen, in your situation, and I hearing you your collect every Sunday, besides Mrs. Hannah More, who might have been a saint if ever there was one, or anything else she liked, with her talents, only she was too good for this wicked world, and so she went to a better, and wrote that charming book 'Cœlebs in Search of a Wife.'"—Oh! my poor dear mother's queer sentences! I was becoming shockingly tired of my own company, when it occurred to me that it would be the correct thing to carve my name on the Newgate stone, à la Jack Sheppard; and I was just putting a few finishing strokes to the N of Coleman, wherewith, in characters at least six inches long, I had embellished a very conspicuous spot over the chimney-piece, when I was surprised "with my chisel so fine, tra la," (*i.e.* with a red hot poker which I had been obliged to put up with instead, it being the only implement attainable,) by the officials, who came to summon me, and who did not appear in the slightest degree capable of appreciating the beauties of my performance. By them I was straightway conducted into the awful presence of sundry elderly gentlemen, rejoicing in heads all more or less bald, and faces expressing various degrees of solemn stupidity, who in their proper persons constituted "the bench." Before these grave and reverend signiors did Master Dullmug and his satellites,

> "Then and there,
> Rehearse and declare"

all my heinous crimes, offences, and misdemeanours; whereupon the aforesaid signiors did solemnly shake their bald heads, and appear exceedingly shocked and particularly puzzled. Well, at last I was called upon for my defence, and, having made up my

mind for some time what line I would take, I cut the matter very short, by owning to have assisted in ringing the bells, which I confessed was an act of folly, but nothing more, and that the idea of its constituting an offence punishable by law was absurd in the extreme. This sent them to book, and, after turning over sundry ponderous tomes, and consulting various statutes of all sorts and sizes, besides whispering together, and shaking their heads once and again, till I began to fear that their necks would be dislocated, they arrived at the conclusion that I was right, or thereabouts. This fact, the eldest, most bald, and most stupid of the party, chosen by common consent, doubtless in virtue of these attributes, as spokesman, proceeded to communicate to me, in a very prosy harangue, to which he appended a lecture—a sort of stock article, which he evidently kept constantly on hand, with blanks which could be filled up to suit any class of offenders. In this harangue he pointed out the dangers of juvenile tricks, and the evils of dissipation, winding up with the assurance that, as I seemed deeply sensible of the error of my ways, they, the magistrates, would, on my making a suitable apology to that excellent public functionary the Mayor of Hillingford, graciously deign to overlook my misconduct. During his long-winded address, a new idea struck me, and, when he had concluded, I inquired, with all due respect, whether "I was to understand that it was quite certain I had committed no offence punishable by law?" To this he replied, "that I might set my mind completely at ease upon that point; that though, morally speaking, I had been guilty of a very serious misdemeanor, in the eye of the law I was perfectly innocent." "In that case, gentlemen," replied I, "the liberty of the subject has been infringed; I have been kept in illegal confinement for some hours, and I believe I have my remedy in an action for false imprisonment against Mr. Dullmug. Does not the law bear me out in what I state?" Again they had recourse to their books, and were unwillingly forced to confess that I was right. "Then," continued I, "so far from making any apology to Mr. Dullmug, unless that gentleman consents to beg *my* pardon, and give me a written apology for the unjust and illegal prosecution to which he has subjected me, I shall at once take the necessary steps to proceed against him." Oh! Frank, I would have given something to have had you there, old boy! when I announced this determination: there was such a shindy as I never before witnessed: old Dullmug was furious, and vowed he'd never apologize: I declared, if he didn't, nothing should

prevent me from bringing my action: the magistrates tried to persuade me, but I was inflexible; and (by Jove! I was very near forgetting the best part of it all) my governor, who was in court, the moment he found the law was on my side, turned suddenly round, swore I had been shamefully used, and that, if it cost him every farthing he possessed in the world, he would see justice done me. So the end of it was, that old Dullmug was forced to write the apology; it now lies in my writing-desk, and I look upon it as one of the proudest trophies man ever possessed. So, Master Frank, considering all things, I think I may reckon I got pretty well out of that scrape. Ever your affectionate, F. C.

P.S.—What have you said or done to render old Vernor so bitter against you? Clara Saville tells Lucy, that, when she informed him of her having met and conversed with you alone in the park that day, he flew into such a rage as she had never seen him in before, and abused you like a pickpocket; and she says she feels certain that, from some cause or other, he entertains a strong personal dislike to you. *Entre nous*, I don't think the fair Clara seems exactly to sympathize with him in this feeling. Considering that you had somewhat less than half an hour to make play in, from Lucy's account you do not seem to have wasted much time. Ah! Master Frank, you are a naughty boy; I can't help sighing when I reflect, how anxious your poor dear mother must feel about you, when she knows you're out.

"Still the same light-hearted merry fellow as ever," exclaimed I, as I closed the letter; "how long, I wonder, will those buoyant spirits of his resist the depressing effect which contact with the harsh realities of life appears always sooner or later to produce? Strange, what he says about that Mr. Vernor; I am not conscious that I ever met the man till the evening of the ball, and yet I fancied there was something which seemed not utterly unfamiliar to me in the expression of his face. Vernor! Vernor! I don't believe I ever heard the name before—it's very odd. Of course, what he says about Miss Saville is all nonsense; and yet there was something in her manner, which made me fancy, if I had time and opportunity —pshaw! what absurdity—I shall have enough to do if I am to imagine myself in love with every nice girl who says, 'Thank you' prettily for any trifling service I may chance to render her. I am sure she is not happy, poor thing! Seriously, I wish I were suffi-

ciently intimate with her to be able to afford her the advice and assistance of a friend, should such be ever required by her. I should take the liberty of asking old Vernor what he meant by his extraordinary behaviour towards me, were I to see much more of him; there's nothing like a little plain speaking. But I need not trouble my brains about the matter; I shall probably never meet either of them again, so what does it signify? She certainly is the loveliest girl I ever saw, though! heigho!" and, with a sigh, for which I should have been somewhat puzzled rationally to account, I took up my gun, and set off for a day's shooting with Harry Oaklands.

CHAPTER XX.

ALMA MATER.

"He's a good divine that follows his own instructions; I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow my own teaching.—The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree."—*Merchant of Venice.*

Time, that venerable and much-vituperated individual, who, if he has to answer for some acts savouring of a taste for wanton destruction—if he now and then lunches on some noble old abbey, which had remained a memorial of the deep piety and marvellous skill of our forefathers—if he crops, by way of salad, some wide-spreading beech or hoary patriarchal oak, which had flung its shade over the tombs of countless generations, and, as it stood forming a link between the present and the past, won men's reverence by force of contrast with their own ephemeral existence—yet atones for his delinquencies by softening the bitterness of grief, blunting the sharp edge of pain, and affording to the broken-hearted the rest, and to the slave the freedom, of the grave;—old Time, I say, who should be praised at all events for his perseverance and steadiness, swept onward with his scythe, and cutting his way through the frost and snow of winter, once more beheld the dust of that "brother of the east wind," March, converted into mud by the showers of April, and the summer was again approaching. It was on a fine morning in May, that, as Oaklands and I were breakfasting together in my rooms at Trinity, we heard a tap at the door, and the redoubtable Shrimp made his appearance. This interesting youth had, under Lawless's able tuition, arrived at such a pitch of knowingness, that it was utterly impossible to make him credit anything; he had not the smallest particle of confidence remaining in the integrity of man, woman, or child; and, like many another of the would-be wise in their generation, the only flaw in his scepticism was the bigoted nature of his faith in the false and hateful doctrine of the universal depravity of the human race. He was the bearer of a missive from his master, inviting Oaklands and myself to a wine party at his rooms that evening.

"I suppose we may as well go," said Oaklands; "I like a positive

engagement somewhere—it saves one the trouble of thinking what one shall do with oneself."

"You can accept it," replied I, "but it would be a waste of time which I have no right to allow myself; not only does it make one idle while it lasts, but the next day also, for I defy a man to read to any purpose the morning after one of Lawless's symposia."

"Call it supper, my dear boy," returned Oaklands, stretching himself; "why do you take the trouble to use a long word, when a short one would do just as well? If I could but get you to economise your labour, and take things a little more easily, it would be of the greatest advantage to you;—that everlasting reading too—I tell you what, Frank, you are reading a great deal too hard; you look quite pale and ill. I promised Mrs. Fairlegh I would not let you overwork yourself, and you shall not either. Come, you must and shall go to this party; you want relaxation and amusement, and those fellows will contrive to rouse you up a bit, and do you good."

"To say the truth," I replied, "that is one of my chief objections to going. Lawless I like, for the sake of old recollections, and because he is at bottom a well-disposed good-hearted fellow; but I cannot approve of the set of men one meets there. It is not merely their being what is termed "fast" that I object to; for, though I do not set up for a sporting character myself, I am rather amused than otherwise to mix occasionally with that style of men; but there is a tone of recklessness in the conversation of the set we meet there, a want of reverence for everything, human and divine, which, I confess, disgusts me—they seem to consider no object too high or too low to make a jest of."

"I understand the kind of thing you refer to," answered Oaklands, "but I think it's only one or two of them who offend in that way; there's one man who is my particular aversion; I declare, if I thought he'd be there to-night, I would not go."

"I think I know who you mean," replied I; "Stephen Wilford, is it not? the man they call 'butcher,' from some brutal thing he once did to a horse."

"You're right, Frank; I can scarcely sit quietly by, and hear that man talk. I suppose he sees that I dislike him, for there is something in his manner to me which is almost offensive; really at times I fancy he wishes to pick a quarrel with me."

"Not unlikely," said I; "he has the reputation of being a dead shot with the pistol, and on the strength of it he presumes to bully every one."

"He had better not go too far with me," returned Oaklands, with flashing eyes; "men are not to be frightened like children; such a character as that is a public nuisance."

"He will not be there to-night, I am glad to say," replied I, "for I met him yesterday when I was walking with Lawless, and he said he was engaged to Wentworth this evening; but, my dear Harry, for Heaven's sake avoid any quarrel with this man; should you not do so, you will only be hazarding your life unnecessarily, and it can lead to no good result."

"My dear fellow, do I ever quarrel with any body? there is nothing worth the trouble of quarrelling about in this world; besides, it would be an immense fatigue to be shot," observed Harry, smiling.

"I have no great faith in your pacific sensations, for they are nothing more," rejoined I; "your indolence always fails you, where it might be of use in subduing (forgive me for using the term) your fiery temper; besides, in allowing a man of this kind to quarrel with you, you give him just the opportunity he wants; in fact you are completely playing his game."

"Well, I can't see that exactly; suppose the worst comes to the worst, and you are obliged to fight him, he stands nearly as good a chance of being killed as you do."

"Excuse me, he does nothing of the kind; going out with a professed duellist is like playing cards with a skilful gambler; the chances are very greatly in his favour: in the first place, nine men out of ten would lose their nerve entirely, when stationed opposite the pistol of a dead shot; then again there are a thousand apparent trifles, of which the initiated are aware, and which make the greatest difference, such as securing a proper position with regard to the sun, taking care that your figure is not in a direct line with any upright object, a tree or post for instance, and lots of other things of a like nature which we know nothing about, all of which he is certain to contrive to have arranged favourably for himself, and disadvantageously for his opponent. Then, having as it were trained himself for the occasion, he is perfectly cool and collected, and ready to avail himself of every circumstance he might turn to his advantage—a moment's hesitation in pulling the trigger when the signal is given, and he fires first—many a man has received his death-wound before now, ere he had discharged his own pistol."

"My dear boy," said Harry, "you really are exciting and alarming yourself very unnecessarily; I am not going to quarrel with Wilford or any body else; I detest active exertion of every kind,

and consider duelling as a fashionable compound of iniquity, containing equal parts of murder and suicide—and we'll go to Lawless's this evening, that I'm determined upon—and—let me see—I've got James's new novel in my pocket. I shall not disturb you if I stay here, shall I? I'm not going to talk."

Then, without waiting for an answer, he stretched himself at full length on (and beyond) the sofa, and was soon buried in the pages of that best of followers in the footsteps of the mighty Wizard of the North—Walter Scott—leaving me to the somewhat less agreeable task of reading mathematics.

CHAP. XXI.

THE WINE PARTY.

"This night I hold an old-accustom'd feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest,
Such as I love."

"A fair assembly, whither should they come?
Servant.—Up——!
Romeo.—Whither?
Servant.—To supper."—*Shakspeare.*

"All is not false that seems at first a lie."—*Southey.*

"Do you bite your thumb at us, Sir?
I do bite my thumb, Sir!
Do you quarrel, Sir?
Quarrel, Sir! No, Sir!
If you do, Sir, I am for you."—*Shakspeare.*

Let the reader imagine a long table covered with the remains of an excellent dessert, interspersed with a multitude of bottles of all shapes and sizes, containing every variety of wine that money could procure, or palate desire; whilst in the centre stood a glorious old China bowl of punch, which the guests were discussing in tumblers,—wine-glasses having been unanimously voted much too slow. Around this table let there be seated from fifteen to twenty men, whose ages might vary from nineteen to three or four and twenty; some smoking cigars, some talking vociferously, some laughing, some, though they were decidedly the minority, listening: but all showing signs of being more or less elated by the wine they had taken. Let the reader imagine all this, and he will have formed a pretty correct idea of the supper party in Lawless's rooms, as it appeared about ten o'clock on the evening subsequent to the conversation I have just detailed.

"Didn't I see you riding a black horse with one white stocking, yesterday, Oaklands?" inquired a young man with a round jovial countenance, which might have been reckoned handsome, but for the extreme redness of the complexion, and the loss of a front tooth, occasioned by a fall received in the hunting field, whose name was Richard, or, as he was more commonly termed Dick, Curtis.

"Yes," replied Oaklands, "I dare say you did; I was trying him."

"Ah! I fancied he was not one of your own."

"No: he belongs to Tom Barret, who wants me to buy him; but I don't think he's strong enough to carry my weight; there's not substance enough about him; I ride nearly eleven stone."

"Oh! he'll never do for you," exclaimed Lawless. "I know the horse well; they call him Blacksmith, because the man who bred him was named Smith; he lives down in Lincolnshire, and breeds lots of horses; but they are none of them, at least none that I have seen, what I call the right sort; don't you buy him,—he's got too much daylight under him to suit you."

"Too long in the pasterns to carry weight," urged Curtis.

"Rather inclined to be cow-hocked," chimed in Lawless.

"Not ribbed home," remarked Curtis.

"Too narrow across the loins," observed Lawless.

"He'll never carry flesh," continued Curtis.

"It's useless to think of his jumping; he'll never make a hunter," said Lawless.

"Only hear them," interrupted a tall, fashionable-looking young man, with a high forehead, and a profusion of light curling hair; "now those two fellows are once off, it's all up with anything like rational conversation for the rest of the evening."

"That's right, Archer, put the curb on 'em; we might as well be in Tattersall's yard at once," observed another of the company, addressing the last speaker.

"I fear it's beyond my power," replied Archer; "they've got such an incurable trick of talking equine scandal, and taking away the characters of their neighbour's horses, that nobody can stop them unless it is Stephen Wilford."

The mention of this name seemed to have the effect of rendering every one grave, and a pause ensued, during which Oaklands and I exchanged glances. At length the silence was broken by Curtis, who said,—

"By the way, what's become of Wilford? I expected to meet him here to-night."

"He was engaged to dine with Wentworth," said Lawless; "but he promised to look in upon us in the course of the evening; I thought he would have been here before this."

As he spoke, a tap was heard at the room-door.

"Well, that's odd," continued Lawless; "that's Wilford for a ducat; talk of the devil,—eh, don't you know? Come in."

"You had better not repeat that in his hearing," observed Archer, "though I believe he'd take it as a compliment on the whole; it's my opinion he rather affects the satanic."

"Hush," said Curtis, pressing his arm, "here he is."

As he spoke, the door opened, and the subject of their remarks entered. He was rather above the middle height, of a slight but unusually elegant figure, with remarkably small hands and feet, the former of which were white and smooth as those of a woman. His features were delicately formed and regular, and the shape of his face a perfect oval; strongly marked eyebrows overshadowed a pair of piercing black eyes; his lips were thin and compressed, and his mouth finely cut; his hair, which was unusually glossy and luxuriant, was jet black, as were his whiskers, affording a marked contrast to the death-like pallor of his countenance. The only fault that could be found in the drawing of his face was, that the eyes were placed too near together; but this imparted a character of intensity to his glance, which added to, rather than detracted from, the general effect of his appearance. His features, when in repose, were usually marked by an expression of contemptuous indifference; he seldom laughed, but his smile conveyed an indication of such bitter sarcasm, that I have seen men, whom he chose to make a butt for his ridicule, writhe under it as under the infliction of bodily torture. He was dressed, as was his wont, entirely in black; but his clothes, which were fashionably cut, fitted him without a wrinkle. He bowed slightly to the assembled company, and then seated himself in a chair, which had been reserved for him at the upper end of the table, nearly opposite Oaklands and myself, saying, as he did so,—"I am afraid I'm rather late, Lawless, but Wentworth and I had a little business to transact, and I could not get away sooner."

"What devil's deed have they been at now, I wonder?" whispered Oaklands to me.

"Manslaughter, most likely," replied Archer (who was seated next me, and had overheard the remark), "Wilford appears so thoroughly satisfied with himself; that was just the way in which he looked the morning he winged Sherringham, for I saw him myself."

"Send me down the claret, will you, Curtis?" asked Wilford. "Punch is a beverage I don't patronize; it makes a man's hand shaky."

"If that is the case," returned Archer, "you ought to make a

point of drinking it for the good of society, my dear Wilford; let me help you to a glass."

"Nonsense, Archer, be quiet, man; here, taste this cool bottle, Wilford; claret's good for nothing if it's at all flat," exclaimed Lawless, drawing the cork of a fresh magnum as he spoke.

"I differ from you in that opinion, Archer," returned Wilford, fixing his keen black eyes upon the person he addressed with a piercing glance; "society is like the wine in this glass," and he filled a bumper to the brim with claret as he spoke: "it requires a steady hand to keep it within its proper bounds, and to compel it to preserve an unruffled surface;" and so saying he raised the glass to his lips without spilling a drop, still keeping his eyes fixed upon Archer's face with the same withering glance.

"Well, I have often heard of looking daggers at a person," continued Archer, who had been drinking somewhat deeply during the evening, and now appeared possessed by a spirit of mischief leading him to teaze and annoy Wilford in every way he could think of; "but Wilford does worse, he positively looks pistols—cocked and loaded pistols—at one. Fairlegh, I shall screen myself behind your broad shoulders; I never could stand fire." So saying, he seized me by the elbows, and, urging me forward crouched down behind me, affecting the extremity of terror.

The scowl on Wilford's brow deepened as he spoke, but, after a moment's hesitation, apparently considering the affair too absurd to take notice of, he turned away with a contemptuous smile, saying, "You make your punch too strong, Lawless."

Archer instantly recovered his erect attitude, and with a flushed face seemed about to make some angry reply, when Lawless, who appeared nervously anxious that the evening should pass over harmoniously, interposed.

"Archer, you're absolutely incorrigible; keep him in order, Fairlegh, eh? give him some more punch, and fill your own glass—it has been empty I don't know how long. I'll find a toast that will make you drink—bumpers round, gentlemen, 'to the health of the prettiest girl in Hertfordshire.' Are you all charged? I beg to propose——"

"Excuse my interrupting you, Lawless," exclaimed I—for I felt certain who it was he was thinking of; and the idea of Miss Saville's name being mentioned and discussed with the tone of license common on such occasions, appeared to me such complete profanation, that I determined, be the consequences what they

might, to prevent it—"Excuse my interrupting you, but I should feel greatly obliged by your substituting some other toast for the one you are about to propose."

"Eh, what! not drink the young woman's health? why I thought you admired her more than I do: not drink her health? how's that, eh?"

"I shall be most happy to explain to you the reasons for my request at some other time," replied I; "at present I can only add, that I shall consider it as a personal favour if you will accede to it."

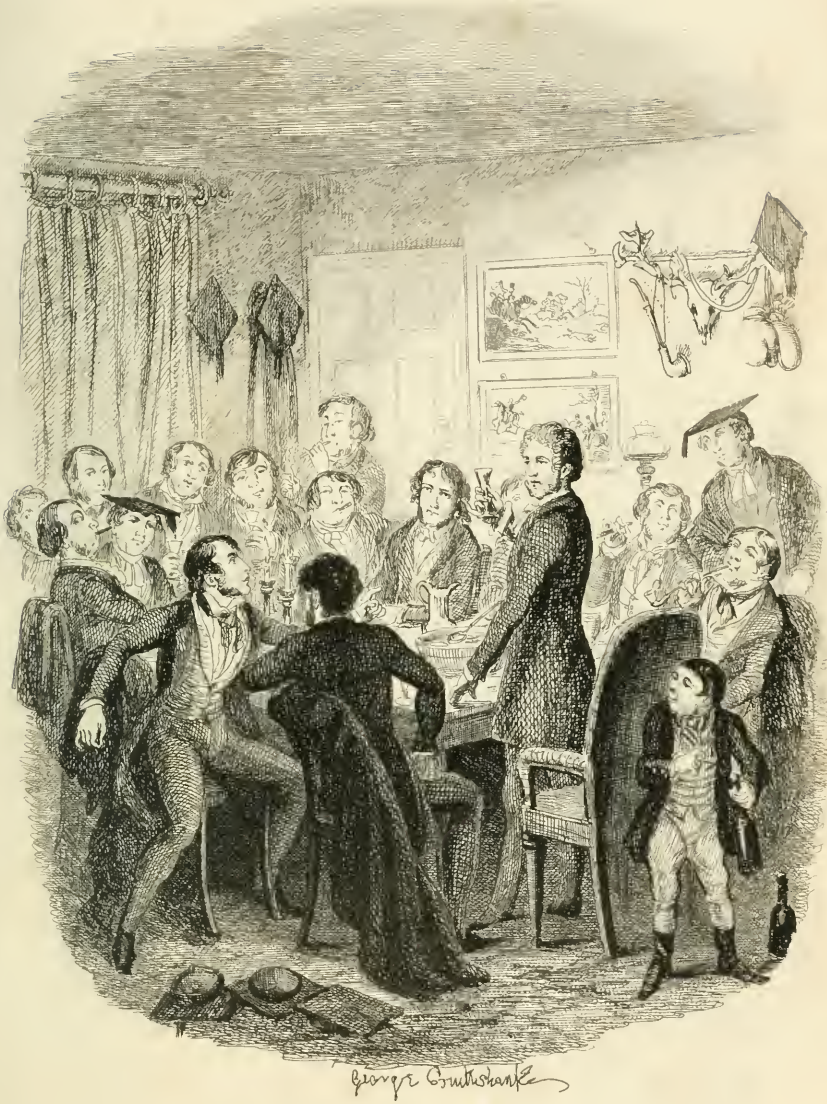
"It does not appear to me to require an Œdipus to discover Mr. Fairlegh's reasons for this request," observed Stephen Wilford; "he evidently does not consider the present company deserving of the high honour of drinking the health of a young lady, whom *he* distinguishes by his admiration."

"Not over-flattering, I must say," muttered Lawless, looking annoyed.

"I suppose he's afraid of our hearing her name, lest some of us should go and cut him out," suggested Curtis in an under tone, which was, however, perfectly audible.

"In the meanwhile, Lawless, I hope you're not going to indulge your friend's caprice, at the expense of the rest of the company," resumed Wilford; "having raised our expectations, you are bound to gratify them."

Lawless, who evidently hesitated between his desire to assert his independence, and his wish to oblige me, was beginning with his usual, "eh? why, don't you see,"—when I interrupted him by saying, "Allow me to set this matter at rest in a very few words. Lawless, I hope, knows me well enough to feel sure that I could not intend any disrespect, either to himself or to his guests—I believe it is not such an unheard-of thing for a gentleman to object to the name of any lady whom he respects, being commented upon with the freedom incidental to a convivial meeting like the present—however that may be, I have asked Lawless as a favour not to drink a certain toast in my presence; should he be unwilling to comply with my request, as I would not wish to be the slightest restraint upon him at his own table, I shall request his permission to withdraw; on this point I await his decision. I have only one more observation to make," continued I, looking at Wilford, who was evidently preparing to speak, "which is, that if, after what I have just said, any gentleman should continue to urge Lawless to


George Cruikshank

give the toast to which I object, I must perforce consider that he wishes to insult me."

As I concluded, there was a murmur of applause, and Archer and one or two others turned to Lawless, declaring it was quite impossible to press the matter further, after what I had said; when Wilford, in a cold, sarcastic tone of voice, observed, "I am sorry Mr. Fairlegh's *last* argument should have failed in convincing me, as easily as it seems to have done some others of the party; such, however, unfortunately being the case, I must repeat, even at the risk of incurring a thing so terrible as that gentleman's displeasure, my decided opinion that Lawless, having informed us he was going to drink a particular toast, should not allow himself to be bullied out of it, in compliance with any man's humour."

This speech, as it might be expected, produced great excitement; I sprang to my feet, (an example followed by several of the party,) and was about to make an angry reply, when Oaklands, who up to this moment had taken no part in the discussion, but sat sipping his wine with his usual air of listless contentment, apparently indifferent to, if not wholly unconscious of, all that was going on, now rose from his seat, and having obtained silence said, "Really, gentlemen, all this confusion appears to me very unnecessary, when a word from our host will end it. Fairlegh has asked you not to propose a certain toast; it only remains for you, Lawless, to say, whether you intend to do so or not."

Thus urged, Lawless replied, "Eh? no, certainly not; Frank Fairlegh's a trump, and I would not do anything to annoy him for more than I can tell: besides, when I come to think of it, I believe he was right, and I was wrong—but you see women are a kind of cattle I don't clearly understand—if it was a horse now——"

A burst of laughter at this characteristic remark drowned the conclusion of the speech, but the announcement that the toast was given up appeared to produce general satisfaction; for, since I had spoken, the popular opinion had been decidedly in my favour.

"The cause of this little interruption to the harmony of the evening being removed," resumed Oaklands, "suppose we see whether its effects may not as easily be got rid of. Every man, I take it, has a right to express his own opinion, and I think Fairlegh must allow that he was a little hasty in presupposing, that by so doing, an insult was intended. This being the case, he will, I am sure, agree with me that he ought not to take any notice of Mr. Wilford's remark."

"Yes, to be sure, that's it—all right, eh?" exclaimed Lawless; "come Fairlegh, as a favour to me, let the matter end here."

Thus urged, I could only reply, that "I was quite willing to defer to their judgment, and do whatever they considered right"—and as Wilford (though I could see that he was annoyed beyond measure at having failed in persuading Lawless to give the toast) remained silent, merely curling his lip contemptuously when I spoke, here the affair ended.

As soon as the conversation became general, Oaklands turned to me with a mischievous smile, and asked, in an under tone, "Pray, Master Frank, what's become of all the wisdom and prudence recommended to me this morning? I am afraid you quite exhausted your stock, and have not reserved any for your own use. Who's the fire-eater now, I wonder?"

"Laugh away, Harry; I may have acted foolishly, as is usually the case where one acts entirely from impulse; but I could not have sat tamely by, and heard Clara Saville's name polluted by the remarks of such men as Curtis and Wilford—I should have got into a row with them sooner or later, and it was better to check the thing at once."

"My dear boy," returned Oaklands, "do not imagine for a moment that I am inclined to blame you; the only thing that I could not help feeling rather amused at, was your throwing down the gauntlet to the gentleman opposite, when I recollected a certain lecture on prudence, with which I was victimized this morning."

"As you are strong, be merciful," replied I; "and, whenever I do a foolish thing, may I always have such a friend at hand to save me from the consequences."

"That's a toast I will drink most willingly," said Oaklands smiling; "the more so, as it reverses the position in which we generally stand with regard to each other, the alteration being decidedly in my favour; but—" he continued, interrupting himself, "what on earth are they laughing at, and making such a row about?"

"Oh, it's merely Curtis romancing with the most unmitigated effrontery, about something that neither he, nor any one else, ever did, out hunting," replied Archer; "a tremendous leap, I fancy it was."

"Do not be too sure that it is impossible," replied I; "a horse once cleared the mouth of a chalk pit with me on its back, when I was a boy; Lawless remembers it."

"Eh! what? Mad Bess!" returned Lawless; "I should think

I did too; I rode there afterwards and examined the place—a regular break-neck looking hole as ever I saw in my life. Tell 'em about it, Frank."

Thus called upon, no choice was left me but to commence the recital, which, although there are few things to which I have a greater objection than being the hero of my own story, I accordingly did. Several remarks were made as I concluded, but, owing either to my well-known dislike of exaggeration, or to the air of truthfulness with which I had told the tale, nobody seemed inclined to doubt that the adventure had occurred in the manner I related, although it was of a more incredible nature than the feat Curtis had recounted. This fact had just excited my attention, when Wilford, turning to the man on his right hand, observed, "It's a great pity that some one hasn't taken notes of this evening's conversation; they would have afforded materials for a new volume of the adventures of Baron Munchausen."

My only answer to this remark, which was evidently intended for my hearing, was a slight smile, for I had determined I would not again be betrayed into any altercation with him, and, being now on my guard, I felt pretty sure of being able to maintain my resolution. To my annoyance, Oaklands replied, "If your remark is intended to throw any discredit upon the truth of the anecdote my friend has related, I must be excused for observing that Lawless and I, though not actually eye-witnesses of the leap, are yet perfectly aware that it took place."

"Was that observation addressed to me, Mr. Oaklands?" inquired Wilford, regarding Oaklands with an insolent stare.

"To you, sir, or to any other man who ventures to throw a doubt on what Fairlegh has just stated," replied Oaklands, his brow flushing with anger.

"Really," observed Wilford, with a contemptuous sneer, "Mr. Fairlegh is most fortunate in possessing such a steady and useful friend: first, when he dictates to Lawless what toasts he is to propose at his own table, and threatens the company generally with the weight of his displeasure should they venture to question the propriety of his so doing, Mr. Oaklands kindly saves him from the consequences of this warlike declaration, by advancing the somewhat novel doctrine, that his friend, having spoken unadvisedly, ought not to act up to the tenor of his words. Again, Mr. Fairlegh relates a marvellous tale of his earlier days, and Mr. Oaklands is prepared to visit the most trifling indication of disbelief with the

fire and fagots of his indignation. Gentlemen, I hope you are all good and true Fairleghites, or you will assuredly be burned at the stake, to satisfy the bigotry of Pope Oaklands the First."

During this speech, I could perceive by the veins on his forehead, swollen almost to bursting, his firmly-set teeth, and his hands clenched till the blood was forced back from the nails, that Oaklands was striving to master his passion; apparently he succeeded in a great measure, for, as Wilford concluded, he spoke calmly and deliberately: "The only reply, sir," he began, "that I shall deign to make to your elaborate insult is, that I consider it as such, and shall expect you to render me the satisfaction due to a gentleman."

"No, Harry," exclaimed I, "I cannot permit this: the quarrel, if it be a quarrel, is mine; on this point I cannot allow even you to interfere. Mr. Wilford shall hear from me."

"No, no!" exclaimed Lawless; "I'm sure you must see, Wilford, that this is not at all the sort of thing, eh? recollect Oaklands and Fairlegh are two of my oldest friends, and something is due to me at all events, eh?—Archer—Curtis—this cannot be allowed to go on."

By this time the party had with one accord risen from their seats, and divided into groups, some collecting round Wilford and Lawless, others about Oaklands and myself, and the confusion of tongues was perfectly deafening. At length I heard Wilford's voice exclaim, "I consider it unfair in the extreme to lay all this quarrelling and disturbance to me, and, as it is not at all to my taste, I beg to wish you a very good evening, Lawless."

"You will do no such thing," cried Oaklands, and, bursting through the cluster of men who surrounded him and endeavoured to detain him, he sprang to the door, double-locked it, and, placing his back against it, added, "no one leaves the room till this affair is settled one way or other." The action, the tone of voice, and the manner which accompanied them, reminded me so forcibly of a deed of a somewhat similar nature at Dr. Mildman's, when Oaklands first heard of the loss of his letter containing the check, and began to suspect foul play—that for a moment the lapse of years was forgotten, and it seemed as though we were boys together again.

Whenever Oaklands was excited by strong emotion of any kind, there was a proud consciousness of power in his every look and motion, which possessed for me an irresistible attraction: and now, as he stood, his noble figure drawn up to its fullest height, his arms folded across his ample chest, in an attitude of defiance a sculptor would have rejoiced to imitate; his head thrown slightly back, and

his handsome features marked by an expression of haughty indignation; when I reflected that it was a generous regard for my honour which excited that indignation, I felt that my affection for him was indeed "passing the love of women," and that he was a friend for whom a man might resolve to lay down his life willingly.

While these thoughts passed through my brain, Lawless and several of the more influential members of the party had been endeavouring to persuade Wilford to own that he was in the wrong, and ought to apologize, but in vain; the utmost concession they could get him to make was, that "he was not aware that he had offered any particular insult to Mr. Oaklands, but if that gentleman chose to put such a construction upon his words, he could not help it, and should be ready to answer for them, when and where he pleased."

They were then, as a last resource, about to appeal to Oaklands, when I interfered by saying, "that the insult, if insult it was, had originated from the part I had taken in the proceedings of the evening, and was directed far more against me than Oaklands; that, under these circumstances, it was impossible for me to allow him to involve himself further in the affair. If my veracity were impugned, I was the proper person to defend it; there could be but one opinion on that subject."

To this they all agreed, and at length Oaklands himself was forced reluctantly to confess he supposed I was right.

"In this case, gentlemen," I continued, "my course is clear; I leave my honour in your hands, certain that, in so doing, I am taking the wisest course; honourable men, and men of spirit like yourselves, will, I feel certain, never recommend anything incompatible with the strictest regard for my reputation as a gentleman; neither will you needlessly hurry me into an act, the consequences of which might possibly embitter the whole of my after life. In order that personal feeling may not interfere any more with the matter, my friend and I will withdraw; Lawless will kindly convey to me your decision, on which, be it what it may, I pledge myself to act;—I wish you a very good night."

Then telling Lawless I should sit up for him, and taking leave of two or three members of the party, with whom I was most intimate, I drew Oaklands' arm within my own, and unlocking the door, left the room, Wilford's fierce black eyes glaring at us with a look of disappointed fury, such as I have witnessed in a caged tiger, being the last object I beheld.

CHAP. XXII.

TAMING A SHREW.

"I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly;
A quarrel."

"I do repent; but Heaven hath pleased it so
To punish me with this."

"We will compound this quarrel."

"What's that?"—"Why, a horse.'
"Tell thou the tale."

"Nay I will win my wager better yet,
And show more signs of her obedience."

"Now go thy ways, thou hast tamed a curst shrew."—*Shakspeare.*"

"WHY did you prevent me from giving that insolent scoundrel the lesson he deserved?" was Oaklands' first observation as we left the quadrangle in which Lawless's rooms were situated; "I do not thank you for it, Frank."

"My dear Harry," replied I, "you are excited at present; when you are a little more cool, you will see that I could not have acted otherwise than I did. Even supposing I could have borne such a thing myself, what would have been said of me, if I had allowed you to fight in my quarrel? no honourable man would have permitted me to associate with him afterwards."

"But I don't see that the quarrel was yours at all," returned Oaklands; "your share of it was ended when the toast affair came to a conclusion; the rest of the matter was purely personal between him and myself."

"How can that be, when the origin of it was his doubting, or pretending to doubt, the truth of the anecdote which I related?" inquired I. "No; depend upon it, Harry, I have acted rightly, though I bitterly regret now having gone to the party, and so exposed myself to all this. I have always looked upon duelling with the greatest abhorrence; to run the risk of committing murder, (for I can call it by no milder name,) when, at the very moment in which the crime is consummated, you may fall yourself, and thus even the forlorn hope of living to repent be cut off from you, appears to me

little short of madness. On one point I am resolved,—if I do go out with him, nothing shall induce me to fire at him; I will not die a murderer, at all events."

"Should your life indeed be sacrificed," said Oaklands, and his deep voice trembled with emotion as he spoke, "I will follow this man as the avenger of blood, fix a mortal insult upon him wherever I meet him, and shoot him like a dog, convinced that I shall perform a righteous act in so doing, by ridding the world of such a monster!"

I saw by his manner that it would be useless to attempt to reason with him at that moment,—his warm feelings, and the fiery though generous impulses of his impetuous nature, had so completely gained possession of him, that he was no longer a reasonable creature,—we therefore walked in silence to my rooms, where we parted; I declining his offer to remain with me till I should learn the decision of Lawless and his friends, on the plea of wishing to be alone, (which was, indeed, a true one,) although my chief reason for so doing, was to prevent the possibility of Oaklands saying anything in his present excited state of mind, which, if repeated, might in any way involve him with Wilford.

My first act, when I found myself once more alone, was to sit down, and endeavour calmly to review the situation in which I was placed In the event of their deciding that the affair might be arranged amicably, my course was clear,—I had only to avoid Wilford as much as possible during the time I should remain at Cambridge, and, if ever I were obliged to be in his company, to treat him with a cool and studied civility, which would leave him no pretext for forcing a quarrel upon me. On the other hand, if they should think it imperative upon me to go out with him, then indeed was the prospect a gloomy one. Wilford, whose ruthless disposition was so well known as to have become, as it were, a by-word among the set he mixed with, was not a man to be offended with impunity, and as, moreover, I had made up my mind not to return his fire, the chances were strongly against my escaping with life.

I am no coward; on the contrary, like most men whose physical energy is unimpaired, I am constitutionally fearless, and in moments of danger and excitement have never found myself wanting; still it would be affectation to deny that the prospect of a sudden and violent death, thus unexpectedly forced upon me, impressed my mind with a vague sensation of terror, mingled with regret for the past, and sorrow for the future. To be thus cut off in the bright spring-time

of vigorous manhood, when the warm blood of youth dances gladly through the veins, and every pulse throbs with the instinct of high and noble daring,—to die with hopes unattained, wishes ungratified, duties unperformed,—to leave those we love, without one parting look or word, to struggle on through this cold unsympathizing world alone and unprotected,—and, above all, to lose one's life in an act the lawfulness of which was more than questionable,—all these things contributed to form a picture, which it required either a very steadfast, or an utterly callous heart, to enable one to gaze upon without blenching. I thought of the misery I should entail upon my family; how, instead of fulfilling my father's dying injunctions to take his place, and devote myself to comfort and protect them, I should wound my mother's heart anew, and spread the dark mist of sorrow over the fair prospect of my sister's young existence; and I cursed my fastidious folly in objecting to the toast, to which, in my self-accusation, I traced all that had afterwards occurred. Then, with the inconsistency of human nature, I began to speculate upon what would be Clara Saville's feelings, were she to learn that it was to prevent the slightest breath of insult being coupled with her name that I was about to peril, not only my life, but, for aught I knew, my hopes of happiness here and hereafter. As the last awful possibility occurred to me, the burden of my misery became too great for me to bear, and, retiring to the privacy of my own chamber, I flung myself on my knees, and poured forth an earnest prayer for pardon for the past, and deliverance for the future.

When I again returned to my sitting-room, my mind had nearly recovered its usual tone, and I felt prepared to meet and to go through whatever might be before me with calmness and determination. As I was uncertain how long it might be before Lawless would arrive, I resolved, in order to avoid the horrors of suspense, to employ myself, and taking up the mathematical treatise upon which I was engaged, and by a vigorous effort of mind compelling my attention, I read steadily for about half an hour, at the end of which time the sound of hasty footsteps was heard ascending the stairs, and in another minute the door was flung open, and Lawless and Archer entered the apartment.

"Reading mathematics, as I'm a slightly inebriated Christian!" exclaimed Archer, taking the book out of my hands; "well, if that isn't pretty cool for a man who may be going to be shot at six o'clock to-morrow morning, for anything he knows to the contrary, I'm no judge of temperature."

"Oh! bother mathematics," rejoined Lawless, flinging the book which Archer held out to him, at a bust of Homer adorning the top of my book shelves, which it fortunately missed—"Frank, old boy! it's all right—you're not to have a bullet through your lungs this time—shake hands, old fellow! I'm so glad about it that I've—"

"Drunk punch enough to floor any two men of ordinary capacity," interposed Archer.

"Of course I have," continued Lawless, "and I consider I've performed a very meritorious act in so doing;—there was the punch, all the other fellows were gone away, somebody must have drunk it, or that young reprobate Shrimp would have got hold of it; and I promised the venerable fish-fag his mother to take especial care of his what do ye call 'ums—morals isn't it? and instil by precept, and—and—"

"Example," suggested Archer.

"Yes, all that sort of thing," continued Lawless, "a taste for, that is, an unbounded admiration of, the sublime and beautiful, as exemplified under the form of—"

"Rum punch, and lashings of it," chimed in Archer; "but suppose you were to tell Fairlegh all that has passed since he came away, or let me do it for you, whichever you like best."

"Oh! you tell him, by all means,—I like to encourage ingenuous youth; fire away, Archer, my boy!"

Thus urged, Archer informed me, that upon my departure there had been a somewhat stormy discussion, in which the events of the evening were freely canvassed; and, at last, they came to a unanimous decision, that any man was at liberty to withdraw, if a toast was proposed to which he objected, and that, if the toastmaster preferred giving it up rather than allow him to leave the party, he had a perfect right to do so. This being the case, they decided that Wilford, having been in the wrong, ought to confess he had spoken hastily, and that, if he would do so, and would add that he had meant nothing offensive either to me or Oaklands, there the matter might rest. This for a long time he positively refused to do; at length, finding he could get no one to support him, he said that, as I had owned I was wrong in attempting to prevent his expressing his opinion, he considered that, in all other respects, I had behaved in a gentlemanly way; therefore, if he had said anything which implied the contrary, he was willing to withdraw it. But, in regard to Mr. Oaklands, he considered he had interfered in a very uncalled-for manner; and he could only repeat, if that gentleman felt himself

aggrieved by anything he had said, the remedy was in his own hands. As soon as he had spoken he withdrew.

The question was again debated, and at length they came to the conclusion, that what Wilford had said amounted to an ample apology as far as I was concerned, which I was bound to accept; and that Oaklands, having agreed to consider the quarrel mine, could not take any farther notice of it; therefore, the affair was at an end.

"Well," said I, as he finished his recital, "I must ever feel grateful to you both for the trouble you have taken on my account, and the kind feeling you have shown towards me throughout I will not pretend to deny that I am very glad the matter has been amicably arranged, for, circumstanced as I am, with everything depending upon my own exertions, a duel would have been ruin to me; but I must say, I think the whole business thoroughly unsatisfactory, and it is only my conviction that a duel would make matters worse, instead of mending them, which leads me to agree to the arrangement. I sincerely hope Oaklands will not hear what Wilford said about him, for he is fearfully irritated against him already."

"I'll tell you what it is," interrupted Lawless; "it's my belief that Wilford's behaviour to you to-night was only assumed for the sake of provoking Oaklands. Master Stephen hates him as he does the very devil himself, and would like nothing better than to pick a quarrel with him, have him out, and, putting a brace of slugs into him, leave him—"

"Quivering on a daisy," said Archer, completing the sentence. "Really I think," he continued, "what Lawless says is very true; you see Oaklands' careless, nonchalant manner, which is always exactly the same whether he is talking to a beggar or a lord, gives continual offence to Wilford, who has contrived somehow to exact a sort of deference and respect from all the men with whom he associates, till he actually seems to consider it his right. Then, Wilford's overbearing manner irritates Oaklands; and so, whenever they have met, the breach has gone on widening, till now they positively hate one another."

"How is it you are so intimate with him?" asked I, "for nobody seems really to like him."

"Well, hang me if I can tell," replied Lawless; "but you see he has some good points about him, after all; for instance, I never saw him out with the hounds yet, that he didn't take a good place, aye, and keep it too, however long the run, and difficult the coun-

try. I killed the best horse I had in my stables, trying to follow him one day in Leicestershire last season; my horse fell with me going over the last fence, and never rose again. Wilford, and one of the whips, who was merely a feather-weight, were the only men in at the death. I offered him three hundred guineas for the horse he rode, but he only gave me one of his pleasant looks, and said it wasn't for sale."

"You've seen that jet-black mare he rides now, haven't you, Fairlegh?" asked Archer.

"Yes; what a magnificent creature it is!" was my reply.

"Did you ever hear how he came by it?"

On my answering in the negative, Archer continued—"Well, I wonder at that, for it was in everybody's mouth at one time: it's worth hearing, if it were but to show the determined character of the man. The mare belonged to Lord Foxington, Lord Sellborough's eldest son. I believe he gave five hundred guineas for her. She was a splendid animal, high couraged, but temperate. In fact, when you were on her, she hadn't a fault; but in the stable she was a perfect devil; there was only one man who dared go near her, and he had been with her from the time she was a filly: so that, when Foxington bought the mare, he was forced to hire the groom too. The most difficult thing of all was putting on the bridle; it was generally half an hour's work before she would let even this groom do it. After dinner, one day, Foxington began talking about this animal, saying what a brute she was to handle, and adding what I have just told you, as to the impossibility of putting on the bridle, when Wilford, who was present, made some remark, which showed he did not believe in the impossibility. Upon which Foxington inquired whether he doubted the fact he had just heard? Wilford replied, that he was sure his lordship fully believed in the truth of what he had just stated; but, for his own part, he had so often found impossibilities of this nature yield to a little courage and determination, that he confessed he was somewhat sceptical. Now it so happened, that Foxington, soon after he bought the mare, had thought just as Wilford did, and determined that he would put the bridle on. Accordingly he attempted it, and the matter ended by his getting regularly driven out of the stable by the animal, with a tolerably severe bite in the fleshy part of his shoulder. Wilford's remark, therefore, as may be imagined, rather nettled him; and he inquired, somewhat tartly, whether Wilford believed he could put the bridle on? and if so,

whether he were willing to try? Wilford replied, in his usual cool tone, that he had an idea he could do so, but that he had no particular inclination to try, as it would probably be some trouble, and the weather was too hot to render active exertion desirable. At this Foxington laughed derisively, saying, that it sounded very like a put off. 'Not at all,' returned Wilford; 'and to show you that I never say a thing without being ready to act up to it, I am willing to stake five hundred guineas against the mare herself, that I go up to her and put the bridle on, without any assistance, and without a stick, or anything whatsoever in my hands.' Foxington accepted the bet gladly, reckoning himself safe to pocket the five hundred guineas. The affair was to come off the next morning at Foxington's stables, at eleven o'clock. His lordship had invited all the men who had been present when the bet was made, to come and witness the event, expecting a complete triumph over Wilford. While they were standing about, waiting, Foxington told them of his own attempt, and his conviction, from the experience he had then gained, that the thing could not be done; and the general opinion was that Wilford, under the influence of wine, had foolishly boasted of a thing which he would not be able to accomplish, and was certain to lose his money. As the time drew near, and he did not make his appearance, an idea began to gain ground that he meant to shirk the affair altogether; and Foxington was becoming exceedingly irate, when, just as the clock was on the stroke of eleven, the sound of a horse's feet was heard, and Wilford cantered quietly up, looking as if he felt no personal interest whatever in the event. On his arrival they proceeded at once to the stable in which the mare stood. She was kept in a loose box, with her clothes on, but her head entirely free.

"I ought, by-the-bye," said Archer, interrupting himself, "to have told you, that I had the account from a man who was there at the time, and saw the whole thing.

"Well, as soon as they went into the stable, the mare left off feeding, and turning round so as to face them, stood with her ears pricked up, gazing wildly at them. Wilford just glanced at her, and then leisurely divested himself of his coat, waistcoat, and neckcloth, turned up the wristbands of his shirt, and taking the bridle from the groom, announced that he was ready. As soon as the door was open, Wilford fixed his eyes sternly on the mare, and walked towards her. To the surprise of every one, the animal allowed him to approach quietly, and pat her, without showing any

symptoms of vice. Men began to exchange inquiring glances with each other, and those who had betted heavily against him trembled for their money; but Foxington, who was better acquainted with the animal, exclaimed, 'Wait a minute, he has not tried to touch her head yet.' Wilford now moved his hand forward along the neck, patting her, and speaking soothingly to her as he advanced; but, as he approached the head, she became impatient and fidgety, and when he attempted to take hold of the ear, in order to put on the bridle, she flung up her head, reared, and ran back a few steps, where she stood, shaking her mane, and pawing the ground. After remaining in this position a few seconds, she suddenly laid back her ears, and showing the whites of her eyes, ran at Wilford with her mouth wide open, and as soon as she got within distance made a ferocious bite at him. By springing on one side with great agility, he just contrived to avoid it; then, dropping the bridle, he threw himself into a sparring attitude, (you know he's a capital boxer,) and, as the mare again ran at him, hit out, and striking her just on a particular spot by the ear, brought her down like a bullock. As soon as she recovered her legs she renewed the attack, and Wilford received her as before, delivering his blow with the same coolness and precision. When the animal rose the second time, she seemed partially stunned, and stood for a moment with her head hanging down, and her ears drooping; but on Wilford's making a step towards her, she again plunged forward, and attempted to seize him with her teeth. Once more did Wilford evade her bite, by springing on one side, and seizing his opportunity, succeeded in planting his hit, and, for the third time, felled her to the ground. When she again rose, however, she showed no disposition to renew the attack, but stood trembling violently, with the perspiration running down her sides. She now allowed Wilford to approach her, to stroke her head, pull her ears, and finally to put the bridle on, and lead her out, completely conquered; and so my Lord Foxington lost the best horse in his stables, and Wilford gained his bet, and added to his character for invincibility, which, by the way, he cared about much the most."

"It was a bold deed," returned I, as Archer concluded his story, "but one does not like a man the better for having done it; there seems to me a degree of wanton cruelty in punishing an animal so severely, unless he had been actually forced to do it. Public executioners may be necessary for the prevention of crime; but that is no reason why one need volunteer as an amateur hangman."

"Everybody thought it an uncommonly plucky thing at the time, and there was an immense fuss made with him afterwards," replied Archer.—"Why, Lawless, are you asleep? rouse up, man—to bed—to bed. Good night, Fairlegh, you'll sleep all the better for knowing you are not to be shot at cock-crow."

So saying, he took Lawless by the arm and marched him off, though, it must be confessed, his gait, as he descended the stairs, was somewhat unsteady.

CHAP. XXIII.

WHAT HARRY AND I FOUND WHEN WE LOST OUR WAY.

"It is too true an evil—gone she is.
* * * * * *
Unhappy girl! Ah! who would be a father!"

"Far in the lane a lonely hut he found,
No tenant ventured on th' unwholesome ground.
Here smokes his forge: he bares his sinewy arm,
And early strokes the sounding anvil warm;
Around his shop the steely sparkles flew,
As for the steed he shaped the bending shoe."—*Gay's Trivia.*

"Be who thou wilt * * * thou art in no danger from me, so thou tell me the meaning of this practice, and why thou drivest thy trade in this mysterious fashion——"

"Your horse is shod, and your farrier paid—what need you cumber yourself further, than to mount, and pursue your journey?"—*Kenilworth.*

On the afternoon of the day after Lawless's wine-party, Oaklands and I were walking down to the stables where his horses were kept (he having, in pursuance of his plan for preventing my over-reading myself, beguiled me into a promise to ride with him), when we encountered Archer.

"I suppose you have heard *the* news *par excellence*," said he, after we had shaken hands.

"No," replied I, "what may it happen to be?"

"Only that Lizzie Maurice, the pastry-cook's daughter, disappeared last night, and old Maurice is going about like a distracted creature this morning, and can't learn any tidings of her."

"What, that pretty girl with the long ringlets, who used to stand behind the counter?" asked I. "What is supposed to have become of her?"

"Yes, that's the identical young lady," returned Archer. "All that seems to be known about her is, that she waited till her father went out to smoke his pipe, as he usually does for an hour or so every evening, and then got the urchin who runs of errands to carry a bundle for her, and set out without saying a word to any one. After she had proceeded a little way, she was met by a man muffled up in a cloak, who took the bundle from the boy, threw him a shilling, and told him to go home directly Instead of doing

so, however, he let them proceed for a minute or two, and then followed them. They went at a quick pace along one or two streets; and at length turned down a lane, not far from the bottom of which a gig was waiting. Another man, also muffled up, was seated in the gig, into which the girl was handed by her companion, who said to the second man in a low tone, 'All has gone well, and without attracting notice.' He then added, in a warning voice—'Remember, honour bright, no nonsense, or'—and here he sunk his voice, so that the boy could not catch what he said; but the other replied, 'On my word, on my honour!' They then shook hands; the second man gathered up the reins, drew the whip across the horse, which sprang forward at speed, and they were out of sight in a moment. The person who was left gazed after them for a minute or so, and then, turning briskly on his heel, walked away, without perceiving the boy, who stood under the shadow of a door-way. On being questioned as to what the men were like, he said that the first kept his face entirely concealed, but he was rather tall, and had black hair, the second was a stout man, with light hair and a high colour—for a dark lantern which he had in the gig with him happened to throw its light on his face, as he was lighting it."

"At what time in the evening did all this take place?" inquired Oaklands.

"Between nine and ten," replied Archer.

Oaklands and I exchanged glances; the same idea had evidently struck us both.

"Has any one seen Wilford this morning?" asked Oaklands.

"Seen him!" returned Archer, "yes, to be sure, he and Wentworth have been parading about arm in arm all over the town: they were with me when I met poor old Maurice, and asked him all sorts of questions about the affair. Wilford seemed quite interested for him."

"Strange!" observed Oaklands musing. "I don't make it out. I would not willingly wrong, even in thought, an innocent man. Archer," he continued, "you have a shrewd keen wit, and sound judgment; tell me, in confidence, man, who do you think has done this?"

"Nay, I am no diviner, to guess other men's secrets," replied Archer; "and these are subjects about which it is not over safe to hazard conjectures. I have told you all I can learn about it, and it is for you to draw your own conclusions. It is no use repeating things to you of which you are already aware; I might

as well tell you dogs bark and cats mew—that Wilford has black hair, and Wentworth is a stout man with a high colour—or any other well-known truism. But I am detaining you—good morning." So saying, he shook hands with us, and left us.

After walking some distance in silence, Oaklands exclaimed abruptly, "It must be so! it is Wilford who has done this thing—you think as I do, do you not, Frank?"

"I am sure we have not evidence enough to prove it," replied I; "but I confess I am inclined, as a mere matter of opinion, to agree with you, though there are difficulties in the way, for which it is not easy to account. For instance, why should Wilford have gone to that party last night, and have incurred the risk of intrusting the execution of his schemes to another, instead of remaining to carry them out himself?"

"That is true," said Oaklands thoughtfully, "I do not pretend to understand it all clearly; but, somehow, I feel a conviction that Wilford is at the bottom of it."

"You should recollect, Harry, that you greatly dislike this man,—are, as I conceive, prejudiced against him,—and are therefore, of course, disposed to judge him harshly."

"Yes, I know all that; still, you'll see it will come out, sooner or later, that Wilford is the man. Her poor old father! I have often observed how he appeared to doat upon that girl, and how proud he was of her: his pride will be converted into mourning now. It is fearful to think," continued Oaklands, "of what crimes men are guilty in their reckless selfishness! Here is the fair promise of an innocent girl's life blighted, and an old man's grey hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave, in order to gratify the passing fancy of a heartless libertine." He paused, and then continued, "I suppose one can do nothing in the matter, having no stronger grounds than mere suspicion to go upon?"

"I should say, nothing likely to be of the slightest benefit," replied I.

"Then the sooner we get to horse the better," returned Oaklands; "hearing of a thing of this kind always annoys me, and I feel disposed to hate my species: a good gallop may shake me into a better humour."

"And the *dolce-far-niente?*" I inquired.

"Oh! don't imagine me inconsistent," was the reply. "Only somehow, just at present, in fact ever since the breeze last night, I've found it more trouble to remain quiet than to exert myself;

so, if you would not tire me to death, walk a little faster; there's a good fellow."

After a brisk ride of nearly two hours along cross roads, we came out upon a wild heath or common of considerable extent.

"Here's a famous place for a gallop," exclaimed Oaklands; "I never can make up my mind which is the fastest of these two horses; let's have a race, and try their speed. Do you see that tall poplar tree, which seems poking its top into the sky, on the other side the common? that shall be the winning-post. Now, are you ready?"

"All right, go ahead," replied I, bending forward, and giving my horse the rein. Away we went merrily, the high-couraged animals bounding beneath us, and the fresh air whistling round our ears, as we seemed to cut our way through it. For some time we kept side by side. The horse Oaklands rode was, if anything, a finer, certainly a more powerful, animal than the one on which I was mounted; but this advantage was fully compensated by the fact of his riding nearly a stone heavier than I did. We were, therefore, on the whole very fairly matched.

After riding at speed, as well as I could reckon, about two miles, Oaklands, to his great delight, had gained nearly a horse's length in advance of me—a space which it seemed beyond my powers of jockeyship to recover. Between us, however, and the tree he had fixed on as our goal, lay a small brook or water-course, near the banks of which the ground became soft and marshy. In crossing this, the greater weight of man and horse told against Oaklands, and gradually I began to creep up to him. As we neared the brook, it struck me that his horse appeared to labour heavily through the stiff clay. Now or never, then, was my opportunity; and shouting gaily, "Over first, for a sovereign—good-bye, Harry," I gave my horse the spur, and putting him well at it, cleared the brook splendidly, and alighted safely on the farther bank.

Determined, if possible, not to be outdone, Harry selected a point, by crossing at which, he could contrive to cut off a corner, and thus gain upon me considerably. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary for him to take his leap at a spot where the brook was some feet wider than ordinary. Relying, however, on the known good qualities of the animal he rode, he resolved to attempt it. Settling himself firmly in his saddle, he got his horse well together, and then throwing up his whip hand, and (as Lawless would have termed it) "sticking in the persuaders," he charged the brook at speed.

It was a well-imagined and bold attempt, and had his horse been fresher, would have succeeded in winning the race; but we had kept up a fair pace during the whole of our ride, and now our gallop across the common, and more particularly the severe pace over the marshy ground, had tried his horse's wind considerably. Still, however, the noble animal strove to the utmost of its power to answer the call made upon it, and by a vigorous effort succeeded in clearing the brook; but the ground on the other side was rugged and broken, and, apparently exhausted by the exertion he had made, he stumbled, and after a slight struggle to preserve his footing, fell heavily forward, pitching Harry over his head as he did so.

Fortunately the ground was soft and clayey, and neither man nor horse seemed to have sustained any injury, for I had scarcely time to draw rein, ere they were on their legs again, and as Harry's first act was to spring lightly into the saddle, I determined to secure the race at once; and cantering up to the poplar tree, which was now within a hundred yards of me, I snapped off a bough in token of victory. As I turned back again, I observed that Harry had dismounted, and was examining his horse's foot.

"Nothing wrong, is there?" asked I, as I rejoined him.

"Yes, everything's wrong," was the reply; "you've been and gone and won the race, you villain you,—I've tumbled nose and knees into a mud-hole, and spoiled my white cord oh-no-we-never-mention-ums,—and 'the Cid' has wrenched off one of his front shoes in the skrimmage."

"And that's the worst of all the misfortunes," said I, "for here we are some ten or twelve miles from Cambridge at least, in a region utterly unknown, and apparently devoid of inhabitants; so where we are to find a smith passes my poor skill to discover."

"You're wrong about the inhabitants, I flatter myself," replied Harry. "Do you see the faint white mist curling above those trees to the right? I take that to be smoke; where there's smoke there must be fire; fire must have been kindled by some human being or other—through that individual we will endeavour to obtain an introduction to some blacksmith, conjointly with sufficient topographical information to enable us to reach our destination in time for a certain meal called dinner, which has acquired an unusual degree of importance in my eyes within the last hour or so. I have spoken!"

"Like a book," replied I; "and the next thing is to bring your sapient deductions to the test of experiment. There is a cart-track

here, which appears to lead towards the smoke you observed; let us try that." So saying, I also dismounted, and throwing my horse's bridle over my arm, we proceeded together on foot, in the direction Oaklands had indicated.

Ten minutes' walking brought us into a rough country lane, winding picturesquely between high banks and green hedges, affording an agreeable contrast to the flat unenclosed tracts of corn land so general throughout Cambridgeshire. After following this lane about a quarter of a mile, we came upon a small retired ale-house, surrounded by trees. As we approached the door, a stout vulgar-looking woman, dressed in rather tawdry finery, ran out to meet us; on coming nearer, however, she stopped short as if surprised, and then re-entered the house as quickly as she had left it, calling to some one within as she did so. After waiting for a minute or two she came back, accompanied by a tall disagreeable-looking man in a velveteen shooting-jacket, with a remarkably dirty face, and hands to match.

"Is there a blacksmith living anywhere near here, my good man?" inquired Oaklands.

"Mayhap there is," was the reply, in a surly tone.

"Can you direct us how to find him?" continued Oaklands.

"What might you want with him when you've found him?" was the rejoinder.

"My horse has cast a shoe, and I want one put on immediately," replied Oaklands, who was getting impatient at the man's unsatisfactory, not to say insolent, manner.

"Mayhap you won't get it done in quite such a hurry as you seems to expect! There's a blacksmith lives at Stony End, about five miles further on. Go straight up the lane for about three miles, then turn to the right, then twice to the left, and then you'll see a finger-post that ain't got nothing on it:—when you come to that——"

"Which I never shall do, depend upon it," replied Oaklands. "My good man, you don't imagine I'm going to fatigue myself and lame my horse by walking five miles up this unlucky lane, do you? If things really are as bad as you would make them out to be, I shall despatch a messenger to summon the smith, and employ myself in the meanwhile in tasting your ale, and consuming whatever you may happen to have in the house fit to eat."

I observed that the landlord and his wife, as I presumed her to be, exchanged very blank looks when Oaklands announced this determination. When he ceased speaking, she whispered a few words

into the ear of the man, who gave a kind of surly grunt in reply, and then, turning to Harry, said, "Mayhap I'll shoe your horse for you myself, if you'll make it worth my while."

"*You* will? why, I thought you said there was not a smith within five miles?"

"No more there aint, only me.'

"And you've been worrying me, and tiring my patience all this time, merely to secure yourself a better bargain? Oh, the needless trouble people give themselves in this world! Shoe the horse, man! and make your own charge; be sure I'll not complain of it, only be quick," replied Oaklands.

"Pr'aps that worn't all," returned the fellow gruffly; "but if ye be in such a mighty hurry, bring 'un along here, and I'll clap a shoe on 'un for ye in a twinkling."

So saying, he led the way through an old gate, and down a stable-yard behind the public-house, at the bottom of which, under a kind of half-barn half-shed, was a blacksmith's shop, fitted up with a forge, and other appliances for shoeing. Our conductor (who, having divested himself of the velveteen jacket, which he replaced with a leather apron, seemed now much more in his proper element) displayed greater quickness and skill in making and applying the shoe, than from his previous conduct I should have anticipated; and I began to flatter myself that our difficulties were in a fair way to be overcome.

I was drawing up the girths of my horse's saddle, which had become somewhat loosened from our gallop, when Oaklands, who had been sitting on a gate near, industriously flogging his boot with his riding-whip, jumped down, saying, "If you'll keep an eye to the horses, Frank, I'll go and see if I can get some of the worst of this mud brushed off."

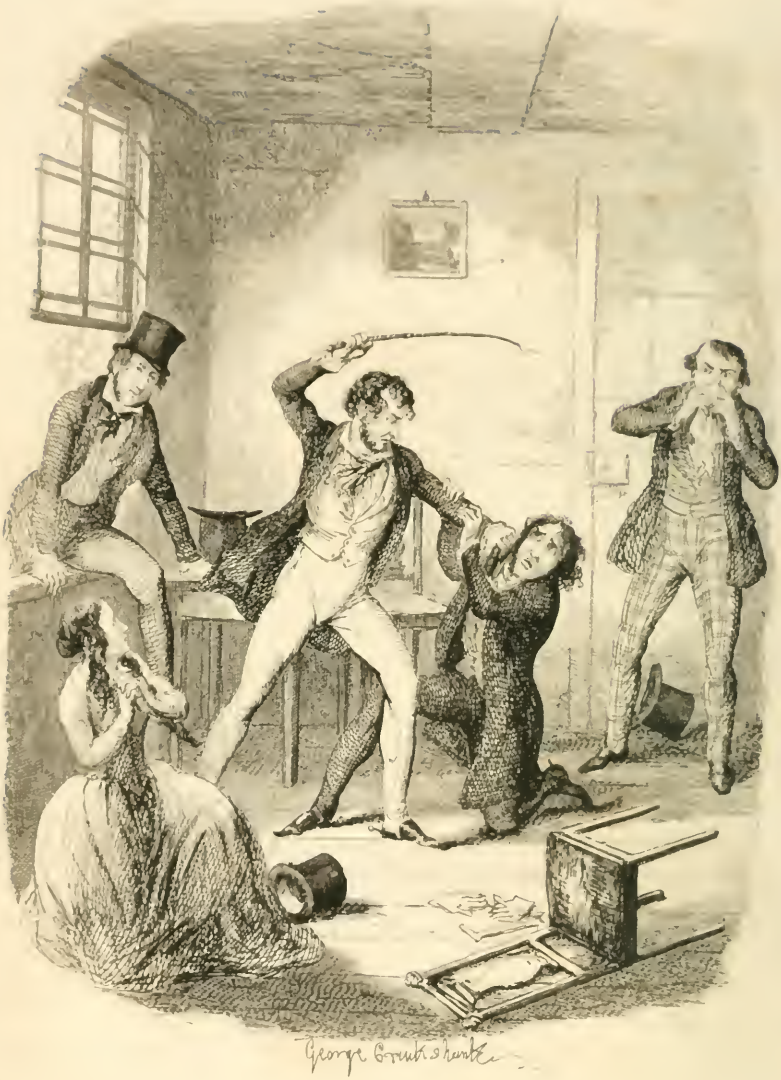
"Better stay where you are! I shall a done direc'ly," observed the smith; "you aint wanted at ther house, I tell yer."

"You should stick to your original trade, for your manners as an innkeeper are certainly not calculated to fascinate customers, my friend," replied Oaklands, walking towards the house.

The man muttered an oath as he looked after him, and then applied himself to his work with redoubled energy. Above ten minutes had elapsed, the shoe was made, fitted to the hoof, and the process of nailing on nearly concluded, but still Oaklands did not return. I was tieing my horse's rein up to a hook in the wall, with the intention of seeking him, when I heard the noise of wheels

in the lane, followed immediately by the clatter of a horse's feet, ridden at speed—both sounds at the moment ceased, as if the parties had stopped at the inn-door The blacksmith also heard them, and appeared for a moment uncertain whether to continue his work or not; then, uttering an impatient exclamation, he began twisting off and clenching the points of the nails as though his life depended on his haste. Perceiving that Oaklands' horse would be ready for him to mount directly, I turned to unfasten my own, when the sound of men's voices raised high in angry debate became audible; then a confused noise as of blows and scuffling ensued, mingled with the screams of women; and immediately the blacksmith's wife ran out, calling to her husband to hasten in, for that "*they* had come back and quarrelled with the strange gentleman, and now they were fighting, and there would be murder done in the house."

Without waiting to hear more, I ran hastily up the yard, followed by the blacksmith and the woman. On reaching the front of the house, I perceived, waiting at the door, a gig, in which was seated a man, dressed in a suit of rusty black, while, under the shade of the trees, a boy was leading up and down a magnificent black mare, which I instantly recognised as the identical animal Wilford had become possessed of in the manner Archer had related to me. The sounds of blows and struggling still continued, and proceeded, as I now ascertained, from the parlour of the ale-house. As the readiest method of reaching the scene of action, I flung open the window, which was not far from the ground, and without a moment's hesitation leaped into the room.


George Cruikshank

CHAP. XXIV.

HOW OAKLANDS BROKE HIS HORSEWHIP.

"Away to heav'n, respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now."

"Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?"

"He swore that he did hold me dear
As precious eyesight, and did value me
Above this world, adding thereto moreover
That he would wed me."

"Men's vows are women's traitors."

"To promise is most courtly and fashionable; performance is a kind of will or testament which argues a great sickness in his judgment that makes it."—*Shakspeare.*

THE sight which met my eyes as I gazed around, was one which time can never efface from my memory. In the centre of the room, his brow darkened by the flush of concentrated indignation, stood Oaklands, his left hand clenching tightly the coat collar of a man, whom I at once perceived to be Wilford, while with his right hand he was administering such a horse-whipping as I hope never again to see a human being subjected to. Wilford, who actually writhed with mingled pain and fury, was making violent but ineffectual struggles to free himself. Near the door stood Wentworth, the blood dropping from his nose, and his clothes dusty and disordered, as if from a fall. Crouching in a corner at the farther end of the room, the tears coursing down her fear-blanched cheeks, and her hands clasped in an agony of terror and despair, was a girl, about nineteen years of age, whom I had little difficulty in recognizing as Lizzie Maurice, the daughter of the old confectioner, of whose elopement we had been that morning informed. On perceiving me she sprang forward, and, clasping my knees, implored me to interfere and endeavour to separate them. I was not, however, called upon to do so, for, as she spoke, his riding-whip broke short in Oaklands' hand, and dashing down the fragments with an exclamation of impatience, he flung Wilford from him with so much force, that he staggered forward a few paces, and would have fallen, had not Wentworth caught him in his arms, just in time to prevent it.

Oaklands then turned to the girl, whom I had raised from the ground and placed on a chair, and addressing her in a stern impressive manner, said, "I will now resume what I was saying to you when yonder beaten hound dared to lay hands upon me. For the last time the choice is offered to you—either return home, and endeavour, by devoting yourself to your broken-hearted old father, to atone as best you may for the misery you have caused him; or, by remaining here, commence a life of infamy which will end sooner or later in a miserable death." He paused; then, as she made no reply, but sat with her face buried in her hands, sobbing as if her heart would break, he continued, "You tell me, the vile tempter who has lured you from your duty, promised to meet you here to-day, and, bringing a clergyman with him, to marry you privately; now if this is the truth——"

"It is, it is," she faltered.

"If so," resumed Oaklands, "a knowledge of the real facts of the case may yet save you. This scoundrel who has promised to marry you, and who belongs to a rank immeasurably above your own, is already notorious for what are termed, by such as himself, affairs of gallantry; while the wretched impostor whom he has brought with him, to act the part of clergyman, is the marker at a low billiard-table, and no more a clergyman than I am."

"Is this really so?" exclaimed the girl, raising her eyes, which were swollen and red with weeping, to Wilford's face; "would you have deceived me thus, Stephen—you, whom I have trusted so implicitly?"

Wilford, who, since the severe discipline he had undergone, had remained seated, with his head resting on his hand, as if in pain, apparently unconscious of what was going on, glared at her ferociously with his flashing eyes, but made no reply. The girl waited for a minute; but, obtaining no answer, turned away with a half shudder, murmuring, "Deceived, deceived!" Then addressing Oaklands, she said, "I will go home to my father, sir; and if he will not forgive me, I can but lie down and die at his feet—better so, than live on, to trust, and be deceived again."

"You have decided rightly, and will not repent it," remarked Oaklands in a milder tone of voice; then, turning to the blacksmith, who had made his appearance, accompanied by his wife, the moment the affray had ended,) he continued; "you must procure some conveyance immediately to take this young person back to Cambridge, and your wife must accompany her." Observing

that the man hesitated, and cast an inquiring glance towards Wilford, he added sternly, "If you would not be compelled to answer for the share you have taken in this rascally business before the proper authorities, do as I have told you without loss of time."

The man having again failed in an attempt to attract Wilford's attention, asked in a surly tone, "Whether a spring-cart would do?" and, being answered in the affirmative, left the room.

Lizzie Maurice withdrew to prepare for her return home, the woman accompanied her; Oaklands strode to the window, and remained watching the operation of harnessing the horse to the tax-cart. Wilford still retained the same attitude, and neither spoke nor moved. Wentworth having glanced towards him once or twice, as if to divine his wishes, receiving no sign, lit a cigar, and leaning his back against the chimney-piece began to smoke furiously, whilst I devoted myself to the pages of an old sporting magazine. Thus passed five minutes, which seemed as if they would never come to an end, at the expiration of which time the tax-cart, driven by a stout country lad, drew up to the door, and the two women making their appearance at the same moment, Oaklands turned to leave the room. As he did so, Wilford, for the first time, raised his head, thereby disclosing a countenance which, pale as death, was characterized by an expression of such intense malignity, as one might conceive would be discernible in that of a corpse reanimated by some evil spirit. After regarding Oaklands fixedly for a moment, he said, in a low grating tone of voice, "You have foiled me once and again—when next we meet, IT WILL BE MY TURN!" Oaklands merely smiled contemptuously, and quitted the house.

Having mounted our horses, we ordered the lad who drove the spring-cart to proceed at his fastest pace, while we followed at a sufficient distance to keep it in sight, so as to guard against any attempt which might be made by Wilford to repossess himself of his victim, without positively identifying ourselves with the party it contained.

We rode in silence for the first two or three miles, at length I could refrain no longer, and, half uttering my thoughts aloud, half addressing my companion, I exclaimed, "Oh, Harry, Harry, what is all this that you have done?"

"Done!" replied Oaklands, with a heightened colour, and flashing eyes, "rescued an innocent girl from a villain who would have betrayed her, and punished the scoundrel about half so severely as

he deserved; but that was my misfortune, not my fault. Had not the whip broken—"

"You know that is not what I mean," returned I; "but this man will challenge you, will—you are aware of his accursed skill—will murder you. Oh! that fiendish look of his, as you left the room,—it will haunt me to my dying day."

"And would you have had me leave the poor girl to her fate, from a coward fear of personal danger? You are strangly altered since you defied a room full of men last night, rather than allow Clara Saville's name to be uttered by their profane lips; or, which is nearer the truth," he continued with a kind smile, "your affection for me blinds you."

"Not so, Harry," replied I; "but it is the recollection of my own feelings, when, while waiting for Lawless's report last night, I believed I should be forced to meet this Wilford—it is the misery, the self-reproach, the bitter penitence of that moment, when, for the first time I was able to reflect on the fearful situation in which by my own rashness I had placed myself, a situation in which crime seemed forced upon me, and it appeared impossible to act rightly—it is the remembrance of all these things which causes me to lament that you, my more than brother, should have involved yourself in similar difficulties."

"But, Frank," he began,—then, interrupting himself, he seized my hand, and, pressing it warmly between his own, exclaimed, "My dear old fellow, forgive me if I have spoken unkindly to you; but this man has maddened me, I believe." He paused, and then continued in a calmer voice, "Let me tell you how it occurred, and you will see I could scarcely have acted otherwise than I have done. You know I went into the public-house to brush off the mud after my tumble. The instant my step sounded in the passage, a girl tripped lightly down the stairs, and ran towards me, exclaiming joyfully, 'You have come at last, then!' On finding that it was not the person she expected, she stopped in alarm, and I perceived to my astonishment that it was Lizzie Maurice. She recognized me at the same moment, and apparently a new idea struck her, for she again approached me, saying, 'Mr. Oaklands, tell me, sir, for heaven's sake, has anything happened to Wilford?' Then, with woman's tact perceiving her mistake, she blushed deeply, adding in a timid voice, 'I fancied you might have been riding with that gentleman; and seeing you alone, I was afraid some accident might have befallen your companion.' All this convinced me that my

suspicions had not been misplaced; and the thought occurred to me, that possibly it might not yet be too late to endeavour to restore her to her father, while the recollection of Archer's account of the old man's distress determined me to make the attempt.

"Taking her, therefore, by the hand, I led her into the parlour, and, begging her to listen to me for five minutes, told her I was aware of her elopement, and entreated her to return home again, adding that her father was broken-hearted at her loss. She shed tears when I mentioned the old man's grief, but positively refused to return home.

"Finding persuasion to be of no avail, I thought I would appeal to her fears: so I informed her that I was aware of the name of the villain who had enticed her away; that I would seek him out and expose him, and that I should instantly acquaint her father with her place of refuge, and advise him to come provided with proper powers to reclaim her. This produced more effect, and, after some hesitation, she told me proudly, that I had done her foul wrong by my doubts; that Mr. Wilford meant to make her his lawful wife; but that, in order to prevent his great relations hearing of it till he could break it to them cautiously, it was advisable to keep the affair quiet—(the old story, in short, private marriage and all the rest of it)—a friend of Wilford's, therefore, to avoid exciting suspicion, had kindly driven her over there the night before, and she was now expecting her lover to come, and bring a clergyman with him, who would marry them by license on the spot; when she heard my step, she thought they had arrived. The air of truth with which she told her tale carried conviction with it.

"I was about to represent to her the improbability of Wilford's intentions being as honourable as she fondly imagined them, when a gig drove up to the door, containing Wentworth, and a fellow whom I recognized as one of the billiard-markers in —— street, dressed in a seedy suit of black for the occasion; immediately afterwards, Wilford arrived on horseback. The whole thing was now perfectly clear. Wilford, having made the girl believe he intended to marry her, persuaded Wentworth, who is completely his tool, to carry her off for him; after which he went to Lawless's wine party, in order to show himself, and thereby avert suspicion. He then bribed the billiard-marker to play parson, got Wentworth to bring him, and going out as if merely for a ride, had joined them here. I was considering what would be the best course to pursue, and was just coming out to consult you, when the door was flung open,

and Wilford and Wentworth entered hastily. The moment Wilford's eyes fell upon me, he started as if a serpent had stung him, and his brow became black as night.

"Advancing a step or two towards me, he inquired, in a voice hoarse with rage, what I was doing there. I replied, 'Endeavouring to prevent some of his evil designs from succeeding.' He tried to answer me, but his utterance was literally choked by passion; and turning away, he strode up and down the room, gnashing and grinding his teeth like a maniac. Having in some degree recovered his self-control, he again approached me, drew himself up to his full height, and pointing to the door, desired me to leave the room.

"I replied, I should not do so, until I had given the young lady a piece of information respecting the character of one of the party —and I pointed to the billiard-marker, who had not yet alighted— I should then, I added, learn from her own lips whether she still wished to remain there, or would take my advice, and return to her father.

"Again Wilford ground his teeth with rage, and desired me, in a voice of thunder, to 'leave the room instantly;' to which I replied flatly, that I would not.

"He then made a sign to Wentworth, and they both approached me, with the intention of forcing me out. Fearing that their combined efforts might overpower me, (for Wentworth, though short, is a broad-shouldered, strong man, and Wilford's muscles are like iron,) I avoided their grasp by stepping backwards, and hitting out with my right hand as I did so, caught Wentworth full on the nose, tapping his claret for him, as the pugilists call it, and sending him down like a shot. At the same moment Wilford sprang upon me with a bound like a tiger, and seizing me by the throat, a short but severe struggle took place between us. I was too strong for him, however; and finding this, he would gladly have ceased hostilities and quitted me, kindly postponing my annihilation till some future day, when it could be more conveniently accomplished by means of a pistol-bullet. But, as you may imagine, my blood was pretty well up by this time, and I determined he should not get off quite so easily. Seizing, therefore, my whip in one hand, I detained him without much trouble with the other—his strength being thoroughly exhausted by his previous exertions—and administered such a threshing as will keep him out of mischief for a week to come, at all events. It was while this was going on that you made your appearance, I think; so now you are *au fait* to the whole affair

—and pray, what else could I possibly have done under the circumstances?"

"It is not easy to say," replied I. "I think the horse-whipping might have been omitted, though I suppose the result would have been the same at all events, and it certainly was a great temptation. The brightest side of the business is your having saved the poor girl, who I really believe is more to be pitied than blamed, having only followed the dictates of her woman's nature, by allowing her feelings to overrule her judgment."

"You have used exactly the right expression there," said Oaklands; "in such cases as the present, it is not that the woman is weak enough to be gulled by every plausible tale which may be told her, but that she has such entire confidence, such pure and child-like faith in the man she loves, that she will believe anything rather than admit the possibility of his deceiving her."

"The deeper villain he, who can betray such simple trust," replied I.

"Villain, indeed!" returned Oaklands. "I would not have been in Wilford's place, to have witnessed that girl's look when the conviction of his baseness was forced upon her, for worlds; it was not a look of anger nor of sorrow, but it seemed as if the blow had literally crushed her heart within her—as if the brightness of her young spirit had fled for ever, and that to live would only be to prolong the duration of her misery. No; I would rather have faced death in its most horrible form, than have met that look, knowing that my own treachery had called it forth."

We rode for some little distance in silence. At length I inquired, how he meant to arrange for Lizzie Maurice's return to her home, as it would not do for us, unless he wished the part we had taken in the affair to be known all over Cambridge, to escort her to her father's door, in the order of procession in which we were then advancing.

"No, I was just thinking of that," replied Oaklands. "It appears to me, that the quietest way of managing the affair will be, to pay the boy for the horse and cart at once, telling him to set Lizzie Maurice down within a short distance of her father's shop, and then to drive back with the woman. Lizzie can proceed on foot, and will probably at this time of the evening (it was nearly seven o'clock) be able to enter the house without attracting attention: we will, however, keep her in sight, so as to be at hand to render her assistance should she require it. I do not myself feel

the slightest doubt but that her father will believe her tale, and treat her kindly. I shall, however, leave her my direction, and should she require my testimony in support of her veracity, or should the old man be unwilling to receive her, she must inform me of it, and I will call upon him, and try to bring him to reason."

"That will not be necessary, depend upon it," returned I; "he will be only too glad to recover her."

"So I think," replied Oaklands.

"What course shall you take with regard to Wilford?" inquired I.

"I shall never mention the affair to any one, if he does not," answered Oaklands; "neither shall I take any step whatever in the matter. I am perfectly satisfied with the position in which I stand at present, and if he should not enjoy an equal share of contentment, it is for him to declare it—the next move must be his, and it will be time enough for me to decide how to act, when we see what it may be. I shall now tell Lizzie Maurice of my plan for her, and inform her, that as long as I hear she is living quietly at home, and leading a respectable life, my lips will be sealed with regard to the occurrences of to-day." So saying, he put his horse into a canter, and riding up to the side of the cart, conversed with the girl in a low tone of voice for several minutes; then, drawing out his purse, handed some money to the driver, and rejoined me. "She is extremely grateful to me for my promise of silence," he commenced; "seems very penitent for her fault, and declares that this is a lesson she shall never forget. She agrees to my plan of walking, and tells me there is a side door to the house, by which she can enter unobserved. She promises to confess everything to her father, and hopes to obtain his forgiveness; and appears altogether in 'a very proper frame of mind,' as the good books say."

"Long may she remain so," returned I; "and now I am happy to say, there are some of the towers of Cambridge visible, for, like you, I am becoming fearfully hungry."

"And for the first time during the last twenty-four hours I am actually beginning to feel as tired as a dog," rejoined Harry, shrugging his shoulders with an air of intense satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHALLENGE.

"Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting,
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.
I will withdraw; but this intrusion shall,
Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall."

"More matter for a May morning."

"Here's the challenge, read it."

"If this letter move him not, his legs cannot."

"O ominous! he comes to kill my heart."

Shakspeare.

Old Maurice, the pastry-cook, had welcomed his daughter gladly, as one returned from the grave, and had learned from her own lips, with mingled tears of joy and gratitude, how, thanks to noble Harry Oaklands, she had escaped unscathed from the perils and temptations to which she had been exposed; many days had elapsed, the Long Vacation had commenced, and the ancient town of Cambridge, no longer animated by the countless throngs of gowns-men, frowned in its unaccustomed solitude, like some City of the Dead, and still no hostile message came from Wilford. Various reports were circulated concerning the reappearance of Lizzie Maurice; but none of them bore the faintest resemblance to the truth, and to no one had the possibility of Oaklands' interference in the matter occurred, save, as it afterwards appeared, to Charles Archer.

For above a week Wilford was confined to his room, seeing only Wentworth; and it was given out that he had met with a severe fall from his horse, and was ordered to keep perfectly quiet. At the expiration of that period he quitted Cambridge suddenly, leaving no clue to his whereabouts. This strange conduct scarcely excited any surprise amongst the set he moved in, as it was usually his habit to shroud all his proceedings under a veil of secrecy, assumed, as some imagined, for the purpose of enhancing the mysterious and unaccountable influence he delighted to exercise over the minds of men.

Oaklands remained a few days at Cambridge after Wilford's departure, as he said, to pack up, but, as I felt certain, to prevent the possibility of Wilford's imagining that he was anxious in any way to avoid him. Finding at length that his rooms were dismantled, and that he would not, in all probability, return till the end of the Long Vacation, Harry ceased to trouble his head any further about the matter, and we set off for Heathfield, accompanied by Archer, whom Harry had invited to pay him a visit.

We found all well at our respective homes; my mother appeared much stronger, and was actually growing quite stout, for her; and Fanny looked so pretty, that I was not surprised at the very particular attentions paid her from the first moment of his introduction by the volatile Archer, (who, by the way, was a regular male flirt,) attentions which I was pleased to perceive she appreciated exactly at their proper value. We soon fell into our old habits again, Oaklands and Archer setting out after breakfast for a stroll, or on a fishing expedition, which usually ended in Harry's coming to an anchor under some spreading oak or beech, where he remained "doing a bit of the *dolce*," as Archer called it, till luncheon time; whilst I, who could not afford to be idle, read hard till about three o'clock, and then joined in whatever amusement was the order of the day.

"Frank, may I come in?" exclaimed Fanny's silvery voice outside my study door, one morning during my working hours, when I had been at home about a fortnight.

"To be sure you may, you little torment," replied I; "are you coming to learn mathematics, or to teach me crochet? for I see you are armed with that vicious little hook with which you delight to torture the wool of innocent lambs into strange shapes, for the purpose of providing your friends with innumerable small anomalous absurdities, which they had much rather be without."

"No such thing, Mr. Impudence, I never make any article which is not particularly useful as well as ornamental. But Frank, dear," she continued, "I should not have interrupted you, only I wanted to tell you something—it may be nothing to signify, and yet I cannot help feeling alarmed about it."

"What is it, darling?" said I, putting my arm round her taper little waist, and drawing her towards me.

"Why, Mr. Oaklands has been here this morning; he came to bring mamma a message from Sir John, inviting us all to dine with him to-morrow."

"Nothing very alarming so far," observed I; "go on."

"Mamma said we should be extremely happy to do so, and quitted the room to find a recipe she had promised to the housekeeper at the Hall."

"And you were left alone with Harry,—that was alarming certainly," said I.

"Nonsense," returned Fanny, while a very becoming blush glowed on her cheek; "how you do interrupt me! Mr. Oaklands had kindly offered to explain a difficult passage in Dante for me, and I was standing on a chair to get down the book,"—

"Which he could have reached by merely stretching out his arm, I dare say, only he was too idle," interposed I.

"Indeed he could not," replied Fanny quickly, "for he was sitting in the low easy chair, and trying to fasten mamma's spectacles on Donald's nose." (Donald being a favourite Scotch terrier belonging to Harry, and a great character in his way.) "Well, I had just found the book," she continued, "and we were going to begin, when a note was given to Mr. Oaklands, which had been brought by a groom from the Hall, with a message that the gentleman who had left it, was waiting at the inn in the village for an answer. Mr. Oaklands began to read it in his usual quiet way, but no sooner had he thrown his eye over the first few lines, than his cheeks flushed, his brow grew dark, and his face assumed that fearfully stern expression which I have heard you describe, but had never before seen myself. As soon as he had finished reading it, he crushed the paper in his hand, and sprung up, saying hurriedly, 'Is Frank ——?' He then took two or three steps towards the door, and I thought he was coming to consult you. Suddenly, however, some new idea seemed to cross his mind, and, stopping abruptly, he strode towards the window, where he remained for a few moments, apparently buried in thought. At length he muttered, 'Yes, that will be better, better in all respects;' and turning on his heel, he was about to quit the room, leaving his hat on the table, when I ventured to hand it to him, saying, 'You are going without your hat, Mr. Oaklands.' He started at the sound of my voice, and seeming for the first time to recollect that I was in the room, he took the hat from me, begging pardon for his inattention, and adding, 'You must allow me to postpone our Italian lesson till ——! till to-morrow, shall we say? I find there is a gentleman waiting to see me.' He paused as if he wished to say more, but scarcely knew how to express himself. 'You saw,' he continued, 'that is—you may have observed that—that in fact there

was something in that note which annoyed me—you need not say anything about it to Mrs. Fairlegh; she is rather given to alarming herself unnecessarily, I fancy,' he added with a faint smile; 'tell Frank I shall not be at home till dinner-time, but that I shall see him in the evening.' He then shook my hand warmly, and holding it for a moment in his own, fixed his eyes on my face with a strange half-melancholy expression that frightened me, and once more saying 'good-bye,' he pressed his hat over his brows, and bounding across the lawn, was out of sight in an instant. His manner was so very odd, so unlike what it generally is. Dear Frank, what is the meaning of all this? I am sure there is something going to happen, something"—

"You silly child," replied I, affecting a careless composure I was far from feeling, "how you frighten yourself about nothing. Harry has probably received a threatening letter from a Cambridge dun, and your lively imagination magnifies it into a—(challenge, I was going to add, but I substituted)—into something dreadful."

"Is that what you really think?" questioned Fanny, fixing her large blue eyes upon my face inquiringly.

I am the worst hand in the world at playing the hypocrite, and with ready tact she perceived at once that I was attempting to deceive her.

"Frank," she resumed, "you have seen but little of me since we were children together, and deem, possibly, that I am a weak, silly girl, unfit to be trusted with evil tidings; but indeed, dear brother, you do me injustice; the sorrows we have gone through," (and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke,) "the necessity for exertion in order to save mamma as much as possible, have given me more strength of character, and firmness of purpose, than girls of my age in general possess; tell me the truth, and fear not but that power will be given me to bear it, be it what it may; but, if I think you are trying to hide it from me, (and do not hope to deceive me,—your face proves that you are as much alarmed at what you have heard as I am myself, and probably with far better reason,) I shall be unable to forget it, and it will make me miserable."

"Well then," replied I, "thus far I will trust you. I do fear, from what you have told me, that Oaklands has received some evil tidings relative to a disagreeable affair in which he was engaged at Cambridge, the results of which are not fully known at present, and which, I am afraid, may yet occasion him much care and anxiety."

"And I had fancied him so light-hearted and happy," said Fanny, thoughtfully; "and is this all I am to know about it then?"

"All that I feel myself at liberty to tell at present," replied I; "recollect, darling, it is my friend's secret, not my own, or you should hear everything."

"Then you will tell me all your secrets, if I ask you?" inquired Fanny, archly.

"Whom should I trust or confide in, if not my own dear little sister?" said I, stroking her golden locks caressingly. "And now," continued I, rising, "I will go and see whether I can do any good in this affair; but when Master Harry is in one of his impetuous moods, he gets quite beyond my management."

"Oh! but you can influence him," exclaimed Fanny, her bright eyes sparkling with animation; "you can calm his impetuosity with your own quiet good sense and clear judgment,—you can appeal to his high and generous nature,—you can tell him how dear he is to you, how you love him with more than a brother's love: you can and will do all this,—will you not, dear Frank?"

"Of course I shall do everything that I am able, my dear child," replied I, somewhat astonished at this sudden outburst; "and now go, and be quiet, this business seems rather to have excited you. If my mother asks for me, tell her I am gone up to the Hall."

"What warm-hearted creatures women are!" thought I, as I ran, rather than walked, through the park; "that little sister of mine, now—no sooner does she hear that *my* friend has got into a scrape, of the very nature of which she is ignorant, (a pretty fuss she would be in if she were aware that it was a duel, of which I am afraid,) than she becomes quite excited, and implores me, as if she were pleading for her life, to use my influence with Harry to prevent his doing—something, she has not the most remote notion what. I wish she did not act quite so much from impulse. It's lucky she has got a brother to take care of her; though it does not become me to find fault with her, for it all proceeds from her affection for me; she knows how wretched I should be if anything were to go wrong with Harry,"—and then I fell into a train of thought as to what it could be which had so suddenly excited him: something connected with Wilford, no doubt; but what?—my fears pointed to a challenge, and my blood ran cold at the thought. He *must* accept it; neither my influence, were it increased a hundredfold, nor that of any one else, could make him apologize; besides, it is not very easy to imagine a satisfactory apology for horse-whipping a

man till he cannot stand. And what course likely to be of any use could I take? On one point I was resolved—nothing should induce me to become his second. What would be my feelings in case of a fatal result, were I to reflect that I had made all the arrangements for the murder of the friend I loved best in the world—that I had actually stationed him opposite the never-failing pistol of his most bitter enemy, and placed in his hand a deadly weapon, wherewith to attempt the life of a fellow-creature, when the next moment he might be called upon to answer before the Judge of all mankind for the deeds which he had done in the flesh? No! I could not be his second. As my meditations reached this point, I overtook the groom who had brought the eventful note, and who was leisurely proceeding on foot towards the Hall, with that peculiar gait observable in men who spend much of their time on horseback, which consists of a compromise between walking and riding, and is strongly suggestive of their inability to realize the fact, that they have not at all times and seasons a perpetual horse between their legs.

"Have you seen Mr. Oaklands, Harris?" inquired I, as the man touched his hat respectfully.

"Yes, sir, I may say I've seen him, and that's all," was the reply. "I brought him a note to the cottage, and was awaiting for orders, when he came tearing out, ordered me to get off, sprang into my saddle, and without stopping for me to let down the stirrups, drove his heels into 'Tom Trot,' (that's the new grey horse, sir, if you please,) and was out of sight like old boots."

Not having time to institute an inquiry into the amount of velocity with which the ancient articles referred to by Mr. Harris were accustomed to vanish, I asked if he knew who brought the note.

"A groom in a dark claret-coloured livery, mounted on a splendid coal-black mare, nearly thorough-bred, but with more bone and substance about her than you generally see in them sort, and as clean on her pins as an unbroke colt. Sir John aint got such a horse in his stables, nor Mr. Harry neither," was the reply.

This was conclusive evidence; the livery and the mare were alike Wilford's.

Leaving the groom to conjecture what he pleased, I hurried on, and reaching the Hall, inquired of the old butler whether Harry was at home.

"No, sir," was the reply, "they aint any of them at home. Mr. Harry came home a horseback about a quarter of an hour ago, and called Mr. Archer into his own room, and they had a confab,

and then Mr. Archer went out a riding on the same horse Mr. Harry came back upon, and would not take any o' the grooms with him—and afore that, Sir John had ordered the phaeton, and Mr. Henry being come home, he asked him to go with him; so you see, Mr. Fairlegh, they're none of 'em at home, sir."

"I'll go into the library and write a note, Edmonds," said I, as a new idea entered my head. "You know Sir John is kind enough to let me order a horse whenever I require one,—will you tell Harris to have one saddled for me in ten minutes' time?"

"Certainly, Mr. Fairlegh; we all of us have Sir John's orders to attend to you, sir, the same as to Mr. Henry, and you're a young gent as it's a pleasure to serve too, if you'll excuse me taking the liberty of telling you so," replied the good old man, as he showed me into the library.

The idea which had come into my head, (and it was more for the sake of doing *something* that I determined on it, than from any great hope I entertained of its proving of much avail,) was to ride over to Hillingford, and consult Freddy Coleman on the subject. Perhaps his clear head and quick wit might enable him to devise some scheme by which, without betraying Harry's confidence, or bringing the slightest imputation on his honour, this duel might be prevented. What else could I do? It was quite clear to me, that the note Harry had received was a challenge from Wilford, and that the gentleman waiting at the inn was some one whom he had prevailed upon to act as his second, probably Wentworth. Harry's first impulse had evidently been to come to me, and ask me to be his second; but, doubtless, guessing the distaste I should have to the office, and reflecting on the difficulties in which, if anything serious were to ensue, I might be involved, he had determined on asking Archer instead. Archer, by instantly setting off on horseback alone, had clearly agreed to his request, and was gone to make the necessary arrangements; and Harry had gladly accompanied Sir John, in order to be out of the way, and so avoid my questions, and any attempts I might have made to induce him to alter his purpose. Were I to inform Sir John on his return, it would be an unpardonable breach of confidence towards Harry: were I to give notice to the authorities, so as to enable them to take measures for preventing the duel, it would always be said by Wilford, that I did so with Harry's connivance, because he was afraid to meet him: thus my hands were tied in every way, and, as I said before, I could think of nothing better, than to ride over and consult Coleman,

whose powers of getting out of a scrape I had seen pretty well tested in the affair of the bell-ringing. I, therefore, scrawled a hasty note to my mother, telling her that I was going to take a long ride, and she had better not wait dinner for me; and leaving a message for Oaklands, with the servant who announced the horse, that I should see him in the evening, flung myself into the saddle, rode quietly till I was out of sight of the house, and then started at a gallop for Hillingford. Unwilling to meet any of the Coleman family, I left my horse at the inn, and, pulling my hat over my brows, to avoid, if possible, being recognised by their servant, rang the bell, and desired him to tell Mr. Frederic that a gentleman wanted to speak with him on particular business.

CHAP. XXVI.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

"If you think your mystery in stratagem can bring this instrument of honour again into his native quarter, be magnanimous in the enterprise, and go on; I will grace the attempt for a worthy exploit if you speed well in it."

"Now I see the bottom of your purpose."

"You see it lawful then."

"I love him, sir,
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,
Beyond what can be valued rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable—"

"Adieu! these foolish drops do somewhat drown my manly spirit."
Shakspeare.

"FREDDY, can I have half an hour's private conversation with you?" asked I, as soon as we had exchanged salutations.

"To be sure you can; but," he added, catching a glimpse of the anxious expression of my face, "there is nothing wrong, is there?"

I made a gesture indicative of silence, and he opened a door into a sort of lawyer's office, saying, in a low voice—

"Come in here, we shall not be interrupted; the governor's in London, and the women are out walking."

"So much the better," replied I, "for the business I am come upon is strictly private, and will not brook delay."

I then told him as concisely as possible the whole affair from beginning to end; he listened attentively to my recital, merely asking a question now and then to elucidate any particular point he did not clearly understand. I fancied he made a gesture of surprise when I first mentioned Wilford's name, and when I had concluded, he asked,

"Wilford, you say, this man's name is? What is his christian name?"

"Stephen."

"And he's a young fellow?"

"About three or four-and-twenty."

"And you want to prevent his being able to shoot Harry Oaklands at five o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"I do not know the hour, but I conclude the meeting will probably take place to-morrow morning. Wilford would not wish to remain in the neighbourhood longer than necessary, lest he should attract attention."

Coleman mused for some minutes, and then muttering as though he were thinking aloud—

"It might be done, so; yes, that would do. I suppose," he said, at length addressing me, "if Master Wilford were taken into custody on a magistrate's warrant at half-past four A.M., that would suit your ideas very nicely? I can so arrange the matter that Wilford will never be able to trace the laying the information to our door."

"But how can you avoid that?" inquired I.

"Why, if you must know," replied Freddy, "I am acquainted with a man who would give a hundred pounds any day to stop our friend Stephen from fighting a duel."

"What, do you know Wilford then?" asked I.

"*Ray-ther*," was the reply, accompanied by a very significant wink—"just a *very few*,—I should say we're not entire strangers, though I have never enjoyed the honour of much personal intercourse with him; but I do not so deeply regret that, as, from your account, it seems rather a dangerous privilege."

"How in the world do you know anything about him?"

"Oh! it's a long story, but the chief points of it are these:—The aforesaid Mr. Wilford, if he can continue to exist till he is five-and-twenty, comes into £5000 a-year; but if we don't interfere, and Harry Oaklands has the luck to send a bullet into him to-morrow morning, away it all goes to the next heir. Wilford is now three-and-twenty, and the trustees make him a liberal allowance of £800 per annum, on the strength of which he spends between £2000 and £3000: of course, in order to do this, he has to raise money on his expectancies. About two months ago he wanted to sell the contingent reversion of a large estate in Yorkshire, from which the greater part of his future income is to be derived; and a client of ours thought of buying it—ergo, we were set to work upon the matter: whilst we were investigating his right, title, and all that sort of thing, lo and behold! a heavy claim, amounting to some thousands, is made upon the property,—by whom, do you think, of all people in the world?—none other than our old acquaintance, Richard Cumberland!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed I, "how strange!"

"Cumberland," continued Freddy, "has become somehow connected with a lot of bill-brokers,—low stock-jobbers,—in fact, a very shady set of people, with whom, however, in our profession, we cannot avoid being sometimes brought into contact; he appears, indeed, himself to be a sort of cross between black-leg and money-lender, improved by a considerable dash of the gambler, and presenting altogether a very choice specimen of the thorough and complete blackguard. Somehow or other he contrives to have cash at command, and, instead of being pigeoned, has now taken to pigeoning others; and to give the devil his due, I fancy he does a very pretty stroke of business in that line. He is a good deal improved in manner and appearance since you remember him; and among people who don't know him very intimately, he affects the man about town: in short, he is quite at the top of his profession. Wilford became acquainted with him at one of the Newmarket meetings, lost money to him, and borrowed money of him, giving him as security a contingent charge upon the estate of double the amount,—ergo, don't you see, if Wilford should by any chance get his quietus from Harry's pistol, he won't live to come into his property, in which case Master Dicky Cumberland is minus some thousands. Now, if I contrive to give him a hint, depend upon it he stops the duel. I will caution him not to let my name appear,—he will not hear yours; so in this way I think we may manage the affair, and defy the old gentleman himself, though he's a very cunning lawyer, to trace it to us."

"Well," said I, "as I see no other means of saving Oaklands' life, —for this Wilford is a noted duellist, and no doubt thirsts to wash out the insult he has received in blood,—I suppose we must do it; but it is an underhand proceeding which I do not at all like."

"There you go with your chivalric, high-flown, romantic notions; you would stand coolly by, and see the best friend you have in the world butchered before your eyes, rather than avail yourself of a splendid chance of saving him, which Fortune has thrown in your way, because, forsooth, it involves a little innocent manœuvring!— for Heaven's sake, my dear boy, get off your stilts, and give common sense fair play."

"I can only repeat what I have just said," replied I; "I will do it, because I believe it is the only thing to save Harry; but I do not like it, and never shall."

"I cry you mercy, Signor Francisco de Fairlegh, the veritable

Don Quixote of the nineteenth century," laughed Freddy; "and now, most chivalrous sir, where do you imagine it probable that this evil *faiteur*, this man of powder and pistols, hangs out?"

"He is most likely at the inn at Carsley, a village on the London road, about four miles from us," replied I; "I don't know of any other place in the neighbourhood where he could be lodged. But I'll tell you what I'll do—the name of the inn is the White Horse, —if I should prove wrong in fancying that he is there, I will send a message to that inn to say where he may be found."

"Exactly," returned Freddy, entering the White Horse, Carsley, in his tablets; "now I think I know all about it, and it shall not be my fault if this duel comes off to-morrow morning. Good-bye, old fellow! I wish you did not look quite so grumpy about it, but it's all those mediæval prejudices of yours. I dare say you'd think it a much more manly way of stopping the business, to electrotype yourself in brass and steel, throw yourself across a cart-horse plated to match, and shouting, 'Fairlegh to the rescue!' run a long pole pointed with iron through Wilford's jugular. Now, I consider mine much the most philosophical way of doing the trick; in fact, conducting a dodge of this kind always affords me intense satisfaction, and puts me into the highest possible spirits. Have you ever seen the war dance, in which the Hotto-potto-cum-from-the-wash-ki Indians usually indulge before they set out on an expedition?—A quarter to three," he continued, pulling out his watch, "the coach to London passes in five minutes, I shan't have time to show it you, —it begins so." Thus saying, he flung himself into a perfectly indescribable attitude, and commenced a series of evolutions, more nearly resembling the contortions of a dancing bear, than any other Terpsichorean exhibition with which I was acquainted. Having continued this until he had made himself very unnecessarily hot, he wound up the performance by flinging a summerset, in doing which he overturned himself and the coal-scuttle into a box of deeds; whereby becoming embarrassed, he experienced much difficulty in getting right end upwards again. "There," he exclaimed, throwing himself into an arm-chair, commonly occupied by his father's portly form—"There! talk of accomplishments,—show me a fashionable young lady who can do that, and I'll say she *is* accomplished. It's rather warm work, though," he continued, wiping his brow, "unless one wears the appropriate costume, which, I believe, consists of a judicious mixture of red and yellow paint, three feathers, and the scalp of your opposite neighbour. Pleasant

that," he added, pointing to the reversed coal-scuttle—"that's a new edition, not of 'Coke upon Littleton,' but of Coal upon—what's the suit? aye, Buffer *versus* Stoker. I shall have to make out a case of circumstantial evidence against the cat, or I'm safe for a rowing from the governor. Good-bye, old boy! don't fancy I'm mad; I'm not the fool I seem, though I confess appearances are against me just at present. There's the coach, by Jingo, three bays and a grey—no chance of the box—is this a hat? off we go." So saying, he shook my hand warmly, bounded down the steps, and the next moment was rattling away towards London as fast as four horses could hurry him.

It was with a heavy heart, and a foreboding of coming evil, that I mounted my horse, and slowly retraced my way towards Heathfield. Coleman's exuberant spirits, which, I believe, were partly assumed, with a view to cheer me by diverting my attention from the painful subject which engrossed it, had produced an effect diametrically opposite to that which he had intended, and I felt dissatisfied with the step I had taken, doubtful of the success of his mission, anxious to a degree, which was absolutely painful, about the fate of Harry, and altogether thoroughly miserable. I reached home in time for dinner, during which meal my abstracted manner and low spirits were so apparent, as to set my mother speculating on the chances of my having over-heated myself and "got a chill," whilst Fanny's anxious questioning glances, to which I was well aware I could furnish no satisfactory reply, produced in me a degree of nervous excitement which was unbearable, and, the moment the cloth was withdrawn, I left the room, and rambled forth into the wildest parts of the park. The quiet peaceful beauty of the scene, and the refreshing coolness of the evening air, had, in a great measure, calmed the excitement under which I laboured, and I was turning my steps towards the Hall, when I met Oaklands and Archer, who, finding I was not at the cottage, had come in search of me. Half an hour's conversation served to render all my previous conjectures matters of certainty. The challenge had been given and accepted, Wentworth was to be Wilford's second, and he and his principal were staying at the inn at Carsley.

The spot chosen for the scene of action was a plot of grass-land situated about half-way between Carsley and Heathfield, so as to be equally accessible to both parties; the time appointed was five o'clock the following morning. Archer was to act as Oaklands' second; everything had been managed with the greatest caution,

and they did not believe a single creature, excepting themselves, had the slightest suspicion that such an event was likely to take place. They had resolved not to tell me till everything was settled, as they feared my opposition. Having thus taken me into their confidence, Archer left us, saying, that "probably Oaklands might like to have some private conversation with me, and he would join us again in half an hour." Rejoiced at this opportunity, I entered at once upon the subject which most interested me, and used every argument I could think of to induce Harry not to return Wilford's fire.

Oaklands heard me for some time in silence, and I began to fear my efforts would be fruitless, when suddenly he turned towards me, and said—his fine eyes beaming with an almost womanly expression of tenderness as he spoke,—"Would this thing make you happier in case I fall?" A silent pressure of the hand was my only answer, and he added in a low voice, "then it shall be as you wish." A pause ensued,—for my own part, the thought that this might be our last meeting, completely overpowered me; I did not know till that moment the strength and intensity of my affection for him. The silence was at length interrupted by Oaklands himself, and the low tones of his deep rich voice trembled with emotion, as they fell mournfully on the stillness of the evening air. "My father!" he said, "that kind old man, whose happiness is wrapped up in my welfare—it will break his heart, for he has only me to love. Frank, my brother!" he added, passing his arm round my neck, as he had used to do when we were boys together, "you are young; your mind is strong and vigorous, and will enable you to meet sorrow as a man should confront and overcome whatever is opposed to him in his path through life. I will not disguise from you that, looking rationally and calmly at the matter, I have but little hope of quitting the field to-morrow alive. My antagonist, naturally a man of vindictive disposition, is incensed against me beyond all power of forgiveness, and his skill is fully equal to his malice: should I fall, I leave my father to your care; be a son to him in the place of the one he will have lost. This is not a light thing which I ask of you, Frank! I ask you to give up your independence, your high hopes of gaining name and fortune by the exercise of your own talents and industry, and to devote some of the best years of your life to the weary task of complying with the caprices, and bearing the sorrows, of a grief-stricken old man. Will you do this for me, Frank?"

"I will," replied I; "and may God help me, as I execute this trust faithfully!"

"You have relieved my mind of half its burden," returned Oaklands warmly. "I have only one thing more to mention:—When I came of age last year, my father's liberality made over to me an ample income for a single man to live on· excepting a few legacies to old servants, I have divided this between your good little sister and yourself, which I thought you would prefer to my leaving it to you alone."

"Harry! indeed, I cannot allow you to do this; others must surely have claims upon you."

"There is not a being in the world who has a right to expect a farthing at my death," answered he; "the next heir to the entailed estates is a distant relation in Scotland, already wealthy. My father has always been a careful man, and, should he lose me, will have a larger income than he can possibly be able to spend; besides, as the duties I have led you to undertake must necessarily prevent you from engaging actively in any profession, I am bound in common fairness to provide for you."

"Be it so, then," replied I,—inwardly breathing a prayer that I never might possess a sixpence of the promised fortune.

"One thing more," added Harry. "When you return to Trinity—poor old Trinity, shall I ever visit you again!—find out how Lizzie Maurice is going on, and if she should marry respectably in her own rank, ask my father to give you £100 as a wedding present for her; only hint that it was my wish, and he would give twenty times the sum. And now good—pshaw!"—he continued, drawing his hand across his eyes, "I shall play the woman if I talk to you much more—good night, Frank,—do you accompany us to the ground to-morrow morning?"

"I will go with you," returned I, with difficulty overcoming a choking sensation in my throat; "I may be able to be of some use."

"Here comes Archer," said Oaklands, "so once more good night; I must get home, or my father will wonder what is become of me."

My heart was too full to speak, and pressing his hand I turned abruptly away, and walked quickly in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DUEL.

"The sun begins to gild the western sky,
And now it is about the very hour.
* * * * *They* will not fail,
Unless it be to come before their time;
So much they spur their expedition."—*Shakspeare.*

"Now go thy way: faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed."—*Shakspeare.*

"And me they bore * * * * *
To one deep chamber shut from sound, and due
To languid limbs and sickness."—*Tennison's Princess.*

I DID not return to the cottage until the usual hour for going to bed, as I did not dare subject myself to Fanny's penetrating glance, in my present state of excitement. The moment family prayers were concluded, I took my candle, and, pleading fatigue, retired to my room. Knowing that sleep was out of the question in my then frame of mind, I merely substituted the clothes I intended to wear in the morning for those I had on, and, wrapping my dressing-gown round me, flung myself on the bed. Here I lay, tossing about, and unable to compose myself for an hour or two, the one idea constantly recurring to me, "What if Coleman should fail!"

At length, feverish and excited, I sprang up, and throwing open the window, which was near the ground, enjoyed the fresh breeze, as it played around my heated temples. It was a lovely night; the stars, those calm eyes of Heaven, gazed down in their brightness on this world of sin and sorrow, seeming to reproach the stormy passions and restless strife of men, by contrast with their own impassive grandeur. After remaining motionless for several minutes, I was about to close the window, when the sound of a footstep on the turf beneath caught my ear, and a form, which I recognized in the moonlight as that of Archer, approached.

"Up and dressed already, Fairlegh?" he commenced, in a low tone, as he perceived me; "may I come in?"

In silence I held out my hand to him, and assisted him to enter.

"Like me," he resumed, "I suppose, you could not sleep."

"Utterly impossible," replied I; "but what brings you here—has anything occurred?"

"Nothing," returned Archer; "Oaklands retired early, as he said he wished to be alone, and I followed his example, but could not contrive to sleep. I don't know how it is, I was engaged in an affair of this nature once before, and never cared a pin about the matter; but somehow I have got what they call a presentiment that harm will come of to-morrow's business. I saw that man, Wilford, for a minute yesterday, and I know by the expression of his eye that he means mischief; there was such a look of fiendish triumph in his face, when he found the challenge was accepted—if ever there was a devil incarnate, he is one."

A sigh was my only answer, for his words were but the echo of my forebodings.

"Now I will tell you what brought me here," he continued; "don't you think that we ought to have a surgeon on the ground, in case of anything going wrong?"

"To be sure," replied I; "I must have been mad to have forgotten that it was necessary—what can be done?—it is not every man that would choose to be mixed up with such an affair. Where is it that William Ellis's brother (Ellis of Trinity Hall, you know) has settled?—he told me he had purchased a practice somewhere in our neighbourhood."

"The very man, if we could but get him," replied Archer; "the name of the village is Harley End· do you know such a place?"

"Yes," returned I, "I know it well; it is a favourite meet of the hounds, about twelve miles hence. I'll find him, and bring him here—what time is it? just two—if I could get a horse, I would do it easily."

"My tilbury and horse are up at the village," said Archer; "now Harry's horses are at home, they could not take mine in at the Hall."

"The very thing," said I, "we shall not lose a moment in that case. Is your horse fast? I shall have to try his mettle."

"He'll not fail you," was the reply, "but don't spare him—I would rather you should ruin fifty horses than arrive too late."

On reaching the inn, we had to rouse a drowsy hostler, in order to procure the key of the stables, and it was half-past two before I was able to start.

The road to Harley End was somewhat intricate, more than once I took a wrong turning, and was forced to retrace my steps; being aware also of the distance I had to perform, I did not dare to hurry the horse too much, so that it only wanted a quarter to four when I reached my destination. Here, however, fortune favoured me. Mr. Ellis, it appeared, being an ardent disciple of Isaac Walton, had resolved to rise at daybreak, in order to beguile sundry trout, and, at the entrance of the village, I met him strolling along, rod in hand. Two minutes sufficed to make him acquainted with the object of my mission, and, in less than five minutes more, (a space of time which I employed in washing out the horse's mouth at an opportune horse-trough, with which I took the liberty of making free,) he had provided himself with a case of instruments, and other necessary horrors, all of which he described to me *seriatim*, as we returned, with an affectionate minuteness for which I could have strangled him.

We started at a rattling pace on our homeward drive, hedge-row and fence gliding by us, like slides in a magic lantern. Archer's horse did not belie the character he had given of him. With head erect, and expanded nostril, he threw his legs forward in a long slashing trot, whirling the light tilbury along at the rate of at least eleven miles an hour; and fortunate it was that he did not flinch from his work, for we had between thirteen and fourteen miles to perform in an hour and ten minutes, in order to reach the appointed spot by five o'clock. In our way we had to pass within a quarter of a mile of Heathfield Hall, all seemed quiet as we did so, and I heard the old clock over the stables strike a quarter to five.

"We shall be in capital time," said I, drawing a long breath, as I felt relieved from an anxious dread of being too late. "It was a near thing though, and if I had not met you as I did, we should scarcely have done it."

"Famous horse," replied Ellis; "but you've rather over-driven him the last two or three miles; if I were Archer, I should have a little blood taken from him—nothing like venesection; it's safe practice in such cases as the present. You've a remarkably clear head, Fairlegh, I know; now I'll just explain to you the common sense of the thing: the increased action of the heart forces the blood so rapidly through the lungs, that proper time is not allowed for oxygenization—"

"We shall be in sight of the place, when we have advanced another hundred yards," interrupted I, as we turned down a green lane.

"Shall we?" replied my companion, standing up in the gig, and shading his eyes with his hand. "Yes, I see them, they're on the ground already, and, by Jove, they are placing their men; they must have altered the time, for it wants full ten minutes of five now."

"If they have," replied I, lashing the horse into a gallop, as I remembered that this unhappy change would probably frustrate Coleman's scheme, "if they have, all is lost."

My companion gazed upon me with a look of surprise, but had no time to ask for an explanation, for at that moment we reached the gate leading into the field, around which was collected a group, consisting of a gig and a dog-cart (which had conveyed the respective parties, and a servant attendant upon each, to the ground), and two or three labouring men, whom the unusual occurrence had caused to leave their work, and who were eagerly watching the proceedings—whilst, just inside the gate, a boy, whom I recognised as Wilford's tiger, was leading about a couple of saddle-horses, one of them being the magnificent black thorough-bred mare, of which mention has been already made.

Pulling up the horse with a jerk which threw him on his haunches, I sprang out, and, placing my hand on the top rail of the gate, leaped over it, gaining, as I did so, a full view of the antagonist parties, who were stationed at about two hundred yards from the spot where I alighted. Scarcely, however, had I taken a step or two towards the scene of action, when one of the seconds, Wentworth, I believe, dropped a white handkerchief, and immediately the sharp report of a pistol rang in my ear, followed instantaneously by a second. From the first moment I caught sight of them, my eyes had become riveted by a species of fascination, which rendered it impossible to withdraw them, upon Oaklands. As the handkerchief dropped, I beheld him raise his arm, and discharge his pistol in the air, at the same moment he gave a violent start, pressed his hand to his side, staggered blindly forward a pace or two, then fell heavily to the ground (rolling partially over as he did so), where he lay, perfectly motionless, and to all appearance dead.

On finding all my worst forebodings thus apparently realized, I stood for a moment horror-stricken by the fearful sight I had witnessed. I was first roused to a sense of the necessity for action by Ellis the surgeon, who shouted as he ran past me—

"Come on, for God's sake, though I believe he's a dead man!"

In another moment I was kneeling on the turf, assisting Archer

(who trembled so violently that he could scarcely retain his grasp) to raise and support Oaklands' head.

"Leave him to me," said I; "I can hold him without assistance; you will be of more use helping Ellis."

"Oh! he's dead—I tell you he is dead!" exclaimed Archer, in a tone of the most bitter anguish.

"He is no such thing, sir," returned Ellis angrily; "hand me that lint, and don't make such a fuss; you're as bad as a woman."

Though slightly reassured by Ellis's speech, I confess that, as I looked upon the motionless form I was supporting, I felt half inclined to fear Archer might be correct in his supposition. Oaklands' head, as it rested against me, seemed to lie a perfectly dead weight upon my shoulder; the eyes were closed, the lips, partly separated, were rapidly assuming a blue, livid tint, whilst from a small circular orifice on the left side of the chest the life-blood was gushing with fearful rapidity.

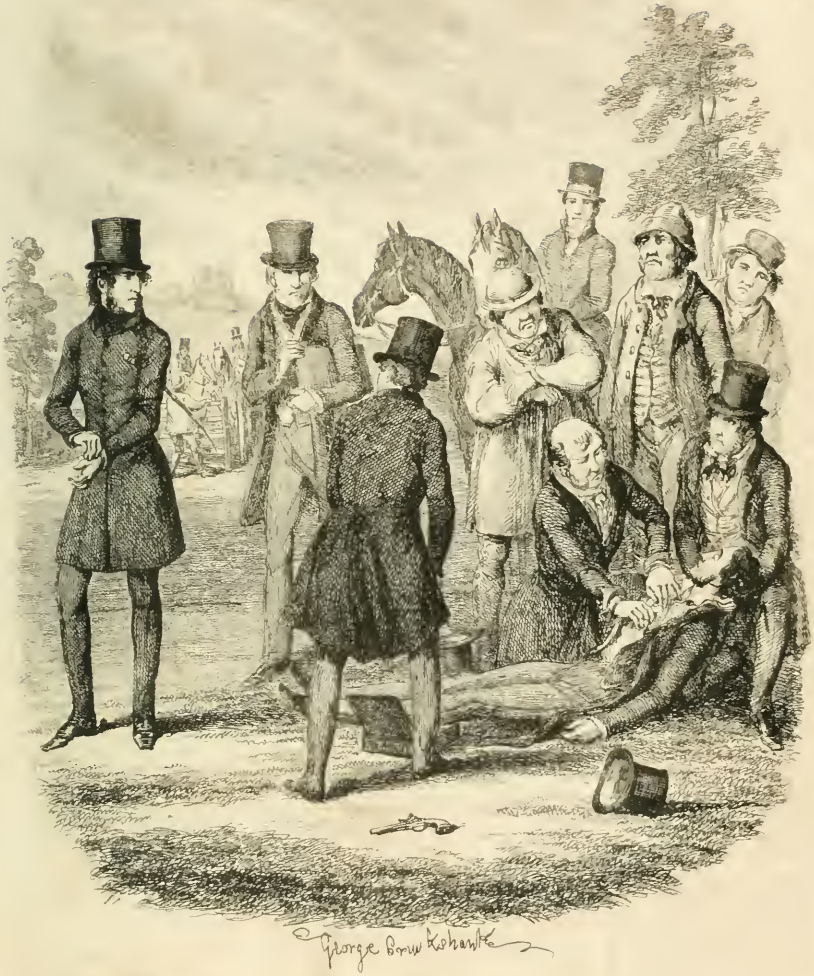
"Open that case of instruments, and take out the tenaculum. No, no! not that; here, give them to me, sir; the man will bleed to death while you are fumbling," continued Ellis, snatching his instruments from the trembling hands of Archer. "You are only in the way where you are," he added; "fetch some cold water, and sprinkle his face; it will help to revive him."

At this moment Wilford joined the group which was beginning to form round us. He was dressed, as usual, in a closely-fitting suit of black, the single-breasted frock-coat buttoned up to the neck, so as not to show a single speck of white which might serve to direct his antagonist's aim. He approached with his wonted air of haughty indifference, coolly fastening the button of his glove. On perceiving me, he slightly raised his hat, saying—

"You are resolved to see this matter to its conclusion, then, Mr. Fairlegh; no one can be better aware than you are how completely your friend brought his fate upon himself."

He paused, as if for an answer; but, as I remained silent, not being able to trust myself to speak, he added, gazing sternly at the prostrate form before him—"Thus perish all who dare to cross my path!" Then casting a withering glance around, as he marked the indignant looks of the bystanders, he turned on his heel, and stalked slowly away.

"He'd best quicken his pace," observed one of the countrymen who had joined the group, "for there's them a coming as may stop his getting away quite so easy."


George Cruikshank

As he spoke, the gate of the field was thrown open, and a couple of men on horseback rode hastily in. Wilford, however, as soon as he perceived their approach, made a sign to the boy to bring his horse, and, springing lightly into the saddle, waited quietly till they came near enough for him to recognise their faces, when, raising his voice, he said in a tone of the most cutting sarcasm—

"As I expected, I perceive it is to Mr. Cumberland's disinterested attachment that I am indebted for this kind attempt to provide for my safety; it so happens you are a quarter of an hour too late, sir. I have the honour to wish you good morning."

Thus saying, he turned his horse's head, and cantered across the field. The man he had addressed, and in whom, though he was considerably altered, I recognised the well-remembered features of Richard Cumberland, paused, as if in doubt what to do; not so his companion, however, who, shouting, "Come on, sir, we may nab him yet," drove the spurs into the stout roadster he bestrode, and galloped furiously after him, an example which Cumberland, after a moment's hesitation, hastened to follow, though at a more moderate rate. Wilford suffered the foremost rider to come nearly up to him, and then, quickening his pace, led him round the two sides of the field; but perceiving the gate was closed, and that men had stationed themselves in front of it to prevent his egress, he doubled upon his pursuers, and putting the mare for the first time to her full speed, galloped towards the opposite side of the field, which was enclosed by a strong fence, consisting of a bank with oak palings on the top, and a wide ditch beyond. Slackening his pace as he approached this obstacle, he held his horse cleverly together, and, without a moment's hesitation, rode at it. The beautiful animal, gathering her legs well under her, faced it boldly, rose to the rail, and clearing it with the greatest ease, bounded lightly over the ditch, and continued her course on the further side with unabated speed. Apparently determined not to be outdone, his pursuer, whipping and spurring with all his might, charged the fence at the same spot where Wilford had cleared it; the consequence was, his horse rushed against the rail, striking his chest with so much violence as to throw himself down, pitching his rider over his head into the ditch beyond, whence he emerged, bespattered with mud, indeed, but otherwise uninjured. As he reappeared, his companion rode up to him, and, after conversing with him earnestly for a minute or so, turned and left the field without exchanging a word with any other person.

During this transaction, which did not occupy one fourth of the time it has taken us to describe, Ellis had in a great measure succeeded in staunching the flow of blood, and a slight shade of colour became again visible in Oaklands' cheek.

"He will bear moving now," said Ellis, quickly, "but you must find something to lay him upon; take that gate off its hinges, some of you fellows—that will answer the purpose capitally. Come, bestir yourselves; every moment is of importance."

Thus urged, five or six sturdy labourers, who had been standing round gazing with countenances of rude but sincere commiseration on the wounded man (for Harry's kind-heartedness and liberality made him very popular amongst the tenantry), started off, and returned in an incredibly short space of time with the gate; upon this were spread our coats and waistcoats, so as to form a tolerably convenient couch, upon which, under Ellis's direction, we lifted, with the greatest caution, the still insensible form of Harry Oaklands.

"Now," exclaimed Ellis, "raise him very slowly on your shoulders, and take care to step together, so as not to jolt him;—if the bleeding should break out again, the whole College of Surgeons could not save him. Where's the nearest house he can be taken to? He'll never last out till we reach the Hall."

"Take him to our cottage," said I, eagerly; "it is more than half a mile nearer than the Hall."

"But your mother and sister?" asked Archer.

"Of course, it will be a great shock to them," replied I; "but I know them both well enough to feel sure they would not hesitate a moment when Harry's life was in the balance. Do you want me for anything, or shall I go on and prepare them for your arrival?"

"Do so, by all means," replied Ellis; "but stay—have you a bedroom on the ground floor?"

"Yes," returned I, "my own."

"Get the bed-clothes opened," continued Ellis, "so that we can put him in at once; it will save me half an hour's time afterwards, and is a thing which should always be thought of on these occasions."

"Anything else?" inquired I.

"Yes, send somebody for the nearest surgeon; two heads are better than one," said Ellis.

Remembering, as I approached the cottage, that the window of

my room, by which Archer and I had quitted it the previous night, would be unfastened, I determined I would enter there, and, proceeding to my mother's door, call her up, and break the news as gently as the exigency of the case would permit, leaving her to act by Fanny as she should think best. Accordingly, I flung up the window, sprang in, and, throwing myself on the nearest chair, sat for a moment, panting from the speed at which I had come. As I did so, a timid knock was heard at the door. I instinctively cried, "Come in!" and Fanny entered.

"I have been so anxious all night about what you told me yesterday, that I could not sleep, so I thought I would come to see if you were up," she commenced; then, for the first time remarking my breathless condition and disordered dress, she exclaimed, "Good Heavens! are you ill? you pant for breath, and your hands and the sleeves of your coat are saturated with water—with—oh! it is blood; you are wounded!" she cried, sinking into a chair, and turning as pale as ashes.

"Indeed, darling, you are alarming yourself unnecessarily; I am perfectly uninjured," replied I, soothingly.

"Something dreadful has happened!" she continued, fixing her eyes upon me; "I read it in your face."

"An accident has occurred," I began; "Oaklands——"

"Stop!" she exclaimed, interrupting me, "the two shots I heard but now—his agitation—his strange manner yesterday—oh! I see it all; he has been fighting a duel." She paused, pressed her hands upon her eyes, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, and then asked, in a low, broken voice, "Is he killed?"

"No," replied I, "on my word, on my honour, I assure you he is not; the bleeding had ceased when I left him, which is a very favourable symptom."

Fanny sighed heavily, as if relieved from some unbearable weight, and, after remaining silent for about a minute, she removed her hands from her face, and said, in a calm tone of voice—

"And now, what is to be done? can I be of any use?"

Astonished at the rapidity with which she had regained her self-control and presence of mind after the violent emotion she had so recently displayed, I replied—

"Yes, love, you can, the Hall is too far off, and they are bringing him here."

As I spoke these words, she shuddered slightly, but seeing I was doubtful whether to proceed, she said, "Go on, pray."

"Would you," I continued, "break this to my mother, and tell her I believe—that is, I trust—there is no great danger—and—and—do that first."

With a sad shake of the head, as if she mistrusted my attempt to reassure her, she quitted the room, whilst I obeyed Ellis's instructions by preparing the bed; after which I unclosed the hall-door, and despatching the gardener's boy to fetch the surgeon, stood anxiously awaiting the arrival of the party. I had not done so many minutes, when the measured tramp of feet gave notice of their approach, and in another instant they came in sight.

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